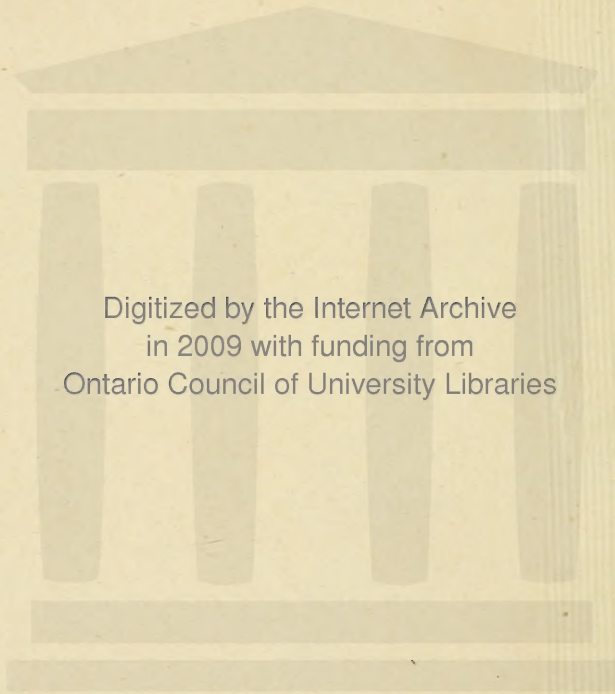
NARRATIVE AND LYRIC POEMS

FIRST SERIES

FOR USE IN THE LOWER SCHOOL

ANNOTATED BY
O. J. STEVENSON

TORONTO
The Copp, Clark Company, Limited



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NARRATIVE AND LYRIC

POEMS

(First Series)

FOR USE IN THE LOWER SCHOOL

WITH ANNOTATIONS BY

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TORONTO
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PREFACE

The Narrative and Lyric Poems contained in this volume are those prescribed by the Department of Education for examination for Junior and Senior Public School Diplomas, and for the Senior High School Entrance, and Entrance into the Model Schools. (Circular 58.)

In arranging the order of the poems, the Editor has taken into consideration the character of the selections with the object both of grading them in the order of increasing difficulty, and of securing variety in the subjects treated. The teacher may, however, follow his own judgment as to the order in which the poems should be taken up in class.

In the annotations the chief points of difficulty have been explained. In the case of a number of the poems, different editions of the poets' works contain different readings. In such cases we have followed the readings that are best known and that have been recognized by the best authorities.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
The Meeting of the Waters	*Moore*	1
Jock o' Hazeldean	*Scott*	2
Horatius	*Macaulay*	3
Alice Brand	*Scott*	27
The Solitary Reaper	*Wordsworth*	31
The Island of the Scots	*Aytoun*	32
Dickens in Camp	*Harte*	39
A Musical Instrument	*Mrs. Browning*	41
Gradatim	*Holland*	43
The Battle of the Lake Regillus	*Macaulay*	45
The Vision of Sir Launfal	*Lowell*	75
The Builders	*Longfellow*	88
British Freedom	*Wordsworth*	89
The Courtship of Miles Standish	*Longfellow*	90
Sohrab and Rustum	*Arnold*	144

NARRATIVE AND LYRIC POEMS

THE MEETING OF THE WATERS.

THERE is not in the wide world a valley so sweet
As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet!
Oh! the last rays of feeling and life must depart
Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.

Yet it *was* not that nature had shed o'er the scene
Her purest of crystal and brightest of green;
'Twas *not* the soft magic of streamlet or hill,
Oh! no—it was something more exquisite still.

'Twas that friends, the beloved of my bosom, were near,
Who made every dear scene of enchantment more dear,
And who felt how the best charms of nature improve,
When we see them reflected from looks that we love.

Sweet vale of Avoca![1] how calm could I rest
In thy bosom of shade with the friends I love best,
Where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease,
And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace!

—*Moore.*

[1] **Avoca.** A valley and river in the County of Wicklow, Ireland. The name signifies "The Meeting of the Waters."

JOCK O' HAZELDEAN.

"Why weep ye by the tide, ladie?
Why weep ye by the tide?
I'll wed ye to my youngest son,
And ye sall[1] be his bride:
And ye sall be his bride, ladie,
Sae comely to be seen"—
But aye she loot[2] the tears down fa'
For Jock o' Hazeldean.

"Now let this wilfu' grief be done,
And dry that cheek so pale;
Young Frank is chief of Errington,
And lord of Langley-dale;
His step is first in peaceful ha',
His sword in battle keen"—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock o' Hazeldean.

"A chain of gold ye sall not lack,
Nor braid to bind your hair;
Nor mettled hound, nor managed[3] hawk,
Nor palfrey fresh and fair;
And you, the foremost o' them a'
Shall ride our forest-queen"—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock o' Hazeldean.

The kirk was deck'd at morning-tide,
The tapers glimmer'd fair;
The priest and bridegroom wait the bride,
And dame and knight are there.
They sought her baith by bower and ha'.
The ladie was not seen!
She's o'er the border, and awa'
Wi' Jock o' Hazeldean! —*Scott.*

[1] **sall.** shall. [2] **loot.** let. [3] **managed.** trained.

HORATIUS.

A LAY MADE ABOUT THE YEAR OF THE CITY CCCLX.

According to legend, Tarquinius Superbus, or Tarquin the Proud, the last of the early kings of Rome, was driven out of the city, partly on account of his own tyranny, and partly because of the misdeeds of his son Sextus Tarquin. The immediate cause of the expulsion of the Tarquins was "the deed of shame," committed by Sextus against Lucretia, the wife of one of the Roman governors. After two unsuccessful attempts to regain the throne, Tarquinius Superbus sought the aid of the Etruscans and Latins, and under the leadership of Lars Porsena, the head of the Etruscan League, the combined forces marched upon Rome. It was then that the incident recorded in the story of *Horatius* is supposed to have taken place. After the defence of the bridge by Horatius, Lars Porsena laid siege to the city and at last reduced it to submission. He did not, however, insist upon the reinstatement of the Tarquins. A fourth and last attempt was made by Tarquin the Proud to regain the throne, by the aid of his Latin allies, under Mamilius of Tusculum. The story of this expedition forms the subject of *The Battle of Lake Regillus.*

I

Lars[1] Porsena of Clusium[2]
By the Nine Gods[3] he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
Should suffer wrong no more.
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
And named a trysting day,[4]
And bade his messengers ride forth,
East and west and south and north,
To summon his array.

II

East and west and south and north
The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
Have heard the trumpet's blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
Who lingers in his home,
When Porsena of Clusium
Is on the march to Rome.

---

[1] **Lars.** Lord or Chieftain. [2] **Clusium.** The modern Chiusi.
[3] **Nine Gods.** The chief Gods of the Etruscans were nine in number.
[4] **trysting day.** A day appointed for meeting.

III

The horsemen and the footmen
Are pouring in amain
From many a stately market-place,
From many a fruitful plain,
From many a lonely hamlet,
Which, hid by beech and pine,
Like an eagle's nest, hangs on the crest
Of purple Apennine;

IV

From lordly Volaterræ,[5]
Where scowls the far-famed hold
Piled by the hands of giants
For godlike kings of old;
From seagirt Populonia,
Whose sentinels descry
Sardinia's snowy mountain-tops
Fringing the southern sky;

V

From the proud mart of Pisæ,[6]
Queen of the western waves,
Where ride Massilia's triremes[7]
Heavy with fair-haired slaves;
From where sweet Clanis[8] wanders
Through corn and vines and flowers;
From where Cortona lifts to heaven
Her diadem of towers.

[5] **Volaterræ.** The Modern Volterra. The walls of the ancient fortress were built of enormous blocks of stone fitted together without cement.

[6] **Pisæ.** Pisa.

[7] **Massilia.** The modern Marseilles, originally a Greek colony and a flourishing commercial centre. **triremes.** Vessels with three banks of oars on each side. **fair-haired slaves.** Slaves from Gaul.

[8] **Clanis.** The modern river Chiana.

VI

Tall are the oaks whose acorns
Drop in dark Auser's[9] rill;
Fat are the stags that champ the boughs
Of the Ciminian hill;[10]
Beyond all streams Clitumnus[11]
Is to the herdsman dear;
Best of all pools the fowler loves
The great Volsinian mere.[12]

VII

But now no stroke of woodman
Is heard by Auser's rill;
No hunter tracks the stag's green path
Up the Ciminian hill;
Unwatched along Clitumnus
Grazes the milk-white steer;
Unharmed the waterfowl may dip
In the Volsinian mere.

VIII

The harvests of Arretium,[13]
This year, old men shall reap,
This year, young boys in Umbro[14]
Shall plunge the struggling sheep;
And in the vats of Luna,
This year, the must[15] shall foam
Round the white feet of laughing girls
Whose sires have marched to Rome.

[9] **Auser.** A tributary of the Arno.

[10] **Ciminian hill.** A lofty mountain in the northern Apennines.

[11] **Clitumnus.** The river Clitumno.

[12] **Volsinian mere.** A lake which took its name from the town of Volsinii (modern Bolsena) situated on its banks.

[13] **Arretium.** Arezzo.

[14] **Umbro.** A river in Etruria,—the modern Ombrone.

[15] **must.** new wine.

IX

There be thirty chosen prophets,
The wisest of the land,
Who alway by Lars Porsena
Both morn and evening stand:
Evening and morn the Thirty
Have turned the verses o'er,
Traced from the right[16] on linen white
By mighty seers of yore.

X

And with one voice the Thirty
Have their glad answer given:
"Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
Go forth, beloved of Heaven:
Go, and return in glory
To Clusium's royal dome;
And hang round Nurscia's[17] altars
The golden shields[18] of Rome."

XI

And now hath every city
Sent up her tale[19] of men:
The foot are fourscore thousand,
The horse are thousands ten.
Before the gates of Sutrium[20]
Is met the great array.
A proud man was Lars Porsena
Upon the trysting day.

---

[16] Written from right to left.

[17] **Nurscia.** The Etruscan goddess of fortune.

[18] **golden shields.** Twelve golden shields kept in the temple of Vesta, and believed by the Romans to be bound up with the safety of their city. See notes on pp. 68 and 71.

[19] **tale.** (A. S. *talian*, "to reckon".) number.

[20] **Sutrium.** Sutri, a city about thirty miles from Rome.

XII

For all the Etruscan armies
  Were ranged beneath his eye
And many a banished Roman,
  And many a stout ally ;
And with a mighty following
  To join the muster came
The Tusculan Mamilius,[21]
  Prince of the Latian[22] name.

XIII

But by the yellow Tiber
  Was tumult and affright :
From all the spacious champaign
  To Rome men took their flight.
A mile around the city,
  The throng stopped up the ways ;
A fearful sight it was to see
  Through two long nights and days.

XIV

For aged folks on crutches,
  And women great with child,
And mothers sobbing over babes
  That clung to them and smiled,
And sick men borne in litters
  High on the necks of slaves,
And troops of sunburnt husbandmen
  With reaping-hooks and staves,

[21] **Tusculan Mamilius.** Tusculum is the modern Frascati, a city about twelve miles from Rome. Mamilius was the son-in-law of Tarquin.

[22] **Latium** was a province in central Italy, inhabited by the Latins. It was conquered by Rome in the fourth century B.C.

XV

And droves of mules and asses
Laden with skins of wine,
And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
And endless herds of kine,
And endless trains of wagons
That creaked beneath the weight
Of corn-sacks and of household goods,
Choked every roaring gate.

XVI

Now, from the rock Tarpeian,[23]
Could the wan burghers spy
The line of blazing villages
Red in the midnight sky.
The Fathers[24] of the City,
They sat all night and day,
For every hour some horseman came
With tidings of dismay.

XVII

To eastward and to westward
Have spread the Tuscan bands;
Nor house nor fence nor dovecote
In Crustumerium[25] stands.
Verbenna down to Ostia[26]
Hath wasted all the plain;
Astur hath stormed Janiculum,[27]
And the stout guards are slain.

---

[23] **Tarpeian.** The Tarpeian Rock was a cliff on one side of the Capitoline Hill in Rome. Tarpeia, from whom the cliff took its name, was the daughter of Tarpeius, the governor of the citadel on this hill. She betrayed the fortress to the Sabines, but as they entered they threw their shields upon her and she was crushed to death.

[24] **Fathers of the City.** The senators.

[25] **Crustumerium.** A Latin city a few miles from Rome.

[26] **Ostia.** A city at the mouth of the Tiber, fifteen miles from Rome.

[27] **Janiculum.** A hill on the right bank of the Tiber.

XVIII

I wis,[28] in all the Senate,
There was no heart so bold,
But sore it ached, and fast it beat,
When that ill news was told.
Forthwith up rose the Consul,[29]
Up rose the Fathers all;
In haste they girded up their gowns,
And hied them to the wall.

XIX

They held a council standing
Before the River-Gate[30];
Short time was there, ye well may guess,
For musing or debate.
Out spake the Consul roundly:
"The bridge[31] must straight go down;
For, since Janiculum is lost,
Naught else can save the town."

XX

Just then a scout came flying,
All wild with haste and fear;
"To arms! to arms! Sir Consul:
Lars Porsena is here."
On the low hills to westward
The Consul fixed his eye,
And saw the swarthy storm of dust
Rise fast along the sky.

---

[28] **I wis.** See H. S. Grammar, p. 176.

[29] **Consul.** After the expulsion of the Tarquin kings, Rome was governed by two chief magistrates, known as consuls.

[30] **the River-Gate.** The gate facing the Janiculum hill.

[31] **bridge.** The Sublician bridge, which connected Rome with Janiculum.

XXI

And nearer fast and nearer
Doth the red whirlwind come;
And louder still and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet's war-note proud,
The trampling, and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
The long array of spears.

XXII

And plainly, and more plainly
Above that glimmering line,
Now might ye see the banners
Of twelve fair cities[32] shine;
But the banner of proud Clusium
Was highest of them all,
The terror of the Umbrian,[33]
The terror of the Gaul.[34]

XXIII

And plainly and more plainly
Now might the burghers know,
By port and vest,[35] by horse and crest,
Each warlike Lucumo.[36]

[32] **twelve fair cities.** The Etruscan confederacy was composed of twelve cities.

[33] **Umbrian.** Umbria was a division of Italy.

[34] **the Gaul.** The Gauls were beginning to invade Italy from the north.

[35] **port and vest.** Bearing and dress.

[36] **Lucumo.** Etruscan chief.

There Cilnius of Arretium
On his fleet roan[37] was seen ;
And Astur of the fourfold shield,[38]
Girt with the brand none else may wield ;
Tolumnius with the belt of gold,
And dark Verbenna from the hold
By reedy Thrasymene.[39]

XXIV

Fast by the royal standard,
O'erlooking all the war,
Lars Porsena of Clusium
Sat in his ivory car.
By the right wheel rode Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name ;
And by the left false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame.

XXV

But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
On the house-tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses,
And shook its little fist.

---

[37] **roan.** A roan horse is of a reddish colour, with white hairs thickly interspersed.

[38] **fourfold.** With four thicknesses of leather.

[39] **Thrasymene.** Lake Trasimenus (modern Lake of Perugia). It is only about twenty feet deep.

XXVI

But the Consul's brow was sad,
And the Consul's speech was low.
And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe.
"Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down;
And if they once may win the bridge,
What hope to save the town?"

XXVII

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late,
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his Gods,

XXVIII

"And for the tender mother
Who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife that nurses
His baby at her breast,
And for the holy maidens[40]
Who feed the eternal flame,
To save them from false Sextus
That wrought the deed of shame?

[40] **holy maidens.** The vestal virgins, whose duty it was to keep the fire burning on the altar in the temple of Vesta. Vesta was the goddess of the home, and the vestal virgins were bound by oath never to marry.

XXIX

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
With all the speed ye may;
I, with two more to help me,
Will hold the foe in play.
In yon strait path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"

XXX

Then out spake Spurius Lartius;
A Ramnian[41] proud was he:
"Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee."
And out spake strong Herminius;
Of Titian blood was he:
"I will abide on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee."

XXXI

"Horatius," quoth the Consul,
"As thou sayest, so let it be,"
And straight against that great array
Forth went the dauntless Three.
For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.[42]

[41] **Ramnian.** The Ramnes were one of the three tribes of which the Roman people were mainly comprised; the Tities were a second of these tribes; Horatius himself belonged to the Luceres, the third tribe, so that in the defence of the bridge all three tribes were represented.

[42] The story is supposed to be told by one of the plebeians, or common people in Rome, about 120 years after the event took place.

XXXII

Then none was for a party;
Then all were for the state;
Then the great man helped the poor.
And the poor man loved the great;
Then lands were fairly portioned;
Then spoils were fairly sold:[43]
The Romans were like brothers
In the brave days of old.

XXXIII

Now Roman is to Roman
More hateful than a foe,
And the Tribunes[44] beard[45] the high,
And the Fathers grind the low.
As we wax hot in faction,
In battle we wax cold:
Wherefore men fight not as they fought
In the brave days of old.

XXXIV

Now while the Three were tightening
Their harness[46] on their backs,
The Consul was the foremost man
To take in hand an axe:
And Fathers mixed with Commons
Seized hatchet, bar, and crow,
And smote upon the planks above,
And loosed the props below.

[43] The speaker voices the grievances of the Plebeians against the Patricians.

[44] **Tribunes.** The officers appointed to defend the rights of the Plebeians against the encroachments of the Patricians.

[45] **beard.** openly defy.

[46] **harness.** armour.

XXXV

Meanwhile the Tuscan army,
Right glorious to behold,
Came flashing back the noonday light,
Rank behind rank, like surges bright
Of a broad sea of gold.
Four hundred trumpets sounded
A peal of warlike glee,
As that great host, with measured tread,
And spears advanced, and ensigns spread,
Rolled slowly towards the bridge's head,
Where stood the dauntless Three.

XXXVI

The Three stood calm and silent,
And looked upon the foes,
And a great shout of laughter
From all the vanguard rose;
And forth three chiefs came spurring
Before that deep array;
To earth they sprang, their swords they drew,
And lifted high their shields, and flew
To win the narrow way;

XXXVII

Aunus from green Tifernum,[47]
Lord of the Hill of Vines;
And Seius, whose eight hundred slaves
Sicken in Ilva's[48] mines;
And Picus, long to Clusium
Vassal in peace and war,

[47] **Tifernum.** A town on the river Tiber.

[48] **Ilva.** Elba, an island in the Mediterranean, off the coast of Italy.

Who led to fight his Umbrian powers
From that gray crag where, girt with towers,
The fortress of Nequinum[49] lowers
O'er the pale waves of Nar.

XXXVIII

Stout Lartius hurled down Aunus
Into the stream beneath:
Herminius struck at Seius,
And clove him to the teeth:
At Picus brave Horatius
Darted one fiery thrust;
And the proud Umbrian's gilded arms
Clashed in the bloody dust.

XXXIX

Then Ocnus of Falerii[50]
Rushed on the Roman Three;
And Lausulus of Urgo,[51]
The rover of the sea;[52]
And Aruns of Volsinium,
Who slew the great wild boar,
The great wild boar that had his den
Amidst the reeds of Cosa's[53] fen
And wasted fields, and slaughtered men,
Along Albinia's[54] shore.

---

[49] **Nequinum.** Narni, on the Nar, which is a tributary of the Tiber.

[50] **Falerii.** One of the twelve Etruscan cities.

[51] **Urgo.** An island in the Mediterranean.

[52] **rover of the sea.** pirate.

[53] **Cosa.** A town on the sea-coast.

[54] **Albinia.** A river in Etruria.

XL

Herminius smote down Aruns:
  Lartius laid Ocnus low:
Right to the heart of Lausulus
  Horatius sent a blow.
"Lie there," he cried, "fell pirate!
  No more, aghast and pale,
From Ostia's walls the crowd shall mark
The track of thy destroying bark.
No more Campania's[55] hinds[56] shall fly
To woods and caverns when they spy
  Thy thrice accursed sail."

XLI

But now no sound of laughter
  Was heard among the foes.
A wild and wrathful clamor
  From all the vanguard rose.
Six spears' lengths from the entrance
  Halted that deep array,
And for a space no man came forth
  To win the narrow way.

XLII

But hark! the cry is Astur:
  And lo! the ranks divide;
And the great Lord of Luna
  Comes with his stately stride.
Upon his ample shoulders
  Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
  Which none but he can wield.

[55] **Campania.** A district along the sea-coast.
[56] **hinds.** peasants.

XLIII

He smiled on those bold Romans
A smile serene and high;
He eyed the flinching Tuscans,
And scorn was in his eye.
Quoth he, "The she-wolf's litter[57]
Stand savagely at bay:
But will ye dare to follow,
If Astur clears the way?"

XLIV

Then, whirling up his broadsword
With both hands to the height,
He rushed against Horatius,
And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius,
Right deftly turned the blow.
The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh:
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
To see the red blood flow.

XLV

He reeled, and on Herminius
He leaned one breathing-space;
Then, like a wild-cat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face.
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet
So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a hand-breadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head.

[57] **The she-wolf's litter.** A reference to the legend of Romulus and Remus, the mythical founders of Rome, who were said to have been suckled by a she-wolf.

XLVI

And the great Lord of Luna
Fell at that deadly stroke,
As falls on Mount Alvernus
A thunder-smitten oak.
Far o'er the crashing forest
The giant arms lie spread;
And the pale augurs, muttering low,
Gaze on the blasted head.

XLVII

On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel;
And thrice and four times tugged amain,
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome,
Fair guests, that waits you here!
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer?"

XLVIII

But at his haughty challenge
A sullen murmur ran,
Mingled of wrath, and shame, and dread,
Along that glittering van.
There lacked not men of prowess,
Nor men of lordly race;
For all Etruria's noblest
Were round the fatal place.

XLIX

But all Etruria's noblest
Felt their hearts sink to see
On the earth the bloody corpses,
In the path the dauntless Three:

And from the ghastly entrance
Where those bold Romans stood,
All shrank, like boys who unaware,
Ranging the woods to start a hare,
Come to the mouth of the dark lair,
Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
Lies amidst bones and blood.

L

Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack;
But those behind cried, "Forward!"
And those before cried, "Back!"
And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array;
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel;
And the victorious trumpet-peal
Dies fitfully away.

LI

Yet one man for one moment
Stood out before the crowd;
Well known was he to all the Three,
And they gave him greeting loud.
"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay, and turn away?
Here lies the road to Rome."

LII

Thrice looked he at the city;
Thrice looked he at the dead
And thrice came on in fury,
And thrice turned back in dread:

And, white with fear and hatred,
Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
The bravest Tuscans lay.

LIII

But meanwhile axe and lever
Have manfully been plied;
And now the bridge hangs tottering
Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"
Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius!
Back, ere the ruin fall!"

LIV

Back darted Spurius Lartius;
Herminius darted back:
And, as they passed, beneath their feet
They felt the timbers crack.
But when they turned their faces,
And on the farther shore
Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more.

LV

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream;
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

LVI

And like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the rein,
The furious river struggled hard,
And tossed his tawny mane,
And burst the curb, and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free,
And whirling down, in fierce career,
Battlement, and plank, and pier,
Rushed headlong to the sea.

LVII

Alone stood brave Horatius,
But constant still in mind;
Thrice thirty thousand foes before,
And the broad flood behind.
"Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
With a smile on his pale face.
"Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
"Now yield thee to our grace."

LVIII

Round turned he, as not deigning
Those craven ranks to see;
Nought spake he to Lars Porsena,
To Sextus nought spake he;
But he saw on Palatinus[58]
The white porch of his home;
And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

[58] **Palatinus.** The Palatine Hill, one of the seven hills of Rome.

LIX

"Oh, Tiber! father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
Take thou in charge this day."
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
The good sword by his side,
And with his harness on his back,
Plunged headlong in the tide.

LX

No sound of joy or sorrow
Was heard from either bank;
But friends and foes, in dumb surprise,
With parted lips and straining eyes,
Stood gazing where he sank;
And when above the surges
They saw his crest appear,
All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer.

LXI

But fiercely ran the current,
Swollen high by months of rain:
And fast his blood was flowing,
And he was sore in pain,
And heavy with his armor,
And spent with changing[59] blows:
And oft they thought him sinking,
But still again he rose.

[59] **changing**, exchanging.

LXII

Never, I ween,[60] did swimmer,
In such an evil case,
Struggle through such a raging flood
Safe to the landing-place:
But his limbs were borne up bravely
By the brave heart within,
And our good father Tiber
Bore bravely up his chin.

LXIII

"Curse on him!" quoth false Sextus;
"Will not the villain drown?
But for this stay, ere close of day
We should have sacked the town!"
"Heaven help him!" quoth Lars Porsena,
"And bring him safe to shore;
For such a gallant feat of arms
Was never seen before."

LXI

And now he feels the bottom;
Now on dry earth he stands;
Now round him throng the Fathers
To press his gory hands;
And now, with shouts and clapping,
And noise of weeping loud,
He enters through the River-Gate,
Borne by the joyous crowd.

[60] **ween.** think; fancy.

LXV

They gave him of the corn-land,
That was of public right,[61]
As much as two strong oxen
Could plough from morn till night;
And they made a molten image,
And set it up on high,
And there it stands unto this day,
To witness if I lie.

LXVI

It stands in the Comitium,[62]
Plain for all folk to see;
Horatius in his harness,
Halting upon one knee:
And underneath is written,
In letters all of gold,
How valiantly he kept the bridge,
In the brave days of old.

LXVII

And still his name sounds stirring
Unto the men of Rome,
As the trumpet-blast that cries to them
To charge the Volscian home;[63]
And wives still pray to Juno[64]
For boys with hearts as bold
As his who kept the bridge so well,
In the brave days of old.

[61] **of public right.** Belonging to the state.

[62] **Comitium.** That part of the Roman forum, or public square, where the Patricians were accustomed to meet.

[63] **To charge the Volscian home.** The Volscians lived in the southern part of Latium. They were constantly at war with the Romans. *Home* is here an adverb strengthening the meaning of *charge*.

[64] **Juno.** Wife of Jupiter, and queen of heaven.

LXVIII

And in the nights of winter,
When the cold north winds blow,
And the long howling of the wolves
Is heard amidst the snow;
When round the lonely cottage
Roars loud the tempest's din,
And the good logs of Algidus[65]
Roar louder yet within;

LXIX

When the oldest cask is opened,
And the largest lamp is lit;
When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
And the kid turns on the spit;
When young and old in circle
Around the firebrands close;
When the girls are weaving baskets,
And the lads are shaping bows;

LXX

When the goodman mends his armor,
And trims his helmet's plume;
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
Goes flashing through the loom:
With weeping and with laughter
Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

—*Macaulay*

[65] **Algidus.** A hill about twelve miles from Rome.

ALICE BRAND.

Merry it is in the good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle[1] are singing,
When the deer sweeps by and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing.

"O Alice Brand, my native land
Is lost for love of you;
And we must hold by wood and wold,[2]
As outlaws wont to do.

"O Alice, 'twas all for thy locks so bright,
And 'twas all for thine eyes so blue,
That on the night of our luckless flight
Thy brother bold I slew.

"Now must I teach to hew the beech
The hand that held the glaive,[3]
For leaves to spread our lowly bed,
And stakes to fence our cave.

"And for vest of pall,[4] thy fingers small,
That wont on harp to stray,
A cloak must shear from the slaughtered deer,
To keep the cold away."

"O Richard! if my brother died,
'Twas but a fatal chance;
For darkling[5] was the battle tried,
And fortune sped the lance.

---

[1] **mavis and merle.** thrush and blackbird.
[2] **wold.** hilly, open country.
[3] **glaive.** sword.
[4] **pall.** A rich cloth from which mantles of noblemen were made.
[5] **darkling.** In the dark.

"If pall and vair[6] no more I wear,
Nor thou the crimson sheen,
As warm, we 'll say, is the russet gray,
As gay the forest-green.

"And, Richard, if our lot be hard,
And lost thy native land,
Still Alice has her own Richard,
And he his Alice Brand."

'T is merry, 't is merry, in good greenwood:
So blithe Lady Alice is singing;
On the beech's pride, and oak's brown side,
Lord Richard's axe is ringing.

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,[7]
Who woned[8] within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruined church,
His voice was ghostly shrill.

"Why sounds yon stroke on beech and oak,
Our moonlight circle's[9] screen?
Or who comes here to chase the deer,
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?
Or who may dare on wold to wear
The fairies' fatal green?[10]

---

[6] **vair.** The fur of the squirrel.

[7] **Elfin King.** King of the fairies.

[8] **woned.** dwelt.

[9] **circle.** dance.

[10] **fairies' fatal green.** The dress of the fairies was green and they were angered when mortals dared to wear garments of that colour.

"Up, Urgan, up! to yon mortal hie,
For thou wert christened[11] man;
For cross or sign thou wilt not fly,
For muttered word or ban.[12]

"Lay on him the curse of the withered heart,
The curse of the sleepless eye
Till he wish and pray that his life would part,
Nor yet find leave to die."

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood
Though the birds have stilled their singing;
The evening blaze doth Alice raise,
And Richard is fagots bringing.

Up Urgan starts, that hideous dwarf,
Before Lord Richard stands,
And, as he crossed and blessed himself,
"I fear not sign," quoth the grisly[13] elf,
"That is made with bloody hands."

But out then spoke she, Alice Brand,
That woman void of fear,—
"And if there's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer."

"Now loud thou liest, thou bold of mood!
It cleaves unto his hand,
The stain of thine own kindly blood,[13]
The blood of Ethert Brand."

---

[11] **christened.** Those who had been baptized were, according to mediæval belief, supposed to enjoy special advantages or privileges

[12] **ban.** curse.

[13] **grisly.** horrible; hideous.

[13] **kindly blood.** The blood of your kindred.

Then forward stepped she, Alice Brand,
And made the holy sign,—
"And if there's blood on Richard's hand,
A spotless hand is mine.

"And I conjure[14] thee, demon elf,
By Him whom demons fear,
To show us whence thou art thyself,
And what thine errand here?"

"'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in Fairy-land,
When fairy birds are singing,
When the court doth ride by their monarch's side,
With bit and bridle ringing:

"And gayly shines the Fairy-land—
But all is glistening show
Like the idle gleam that December's beam
Can dart on ice and snow.

"And fading, like that varied gleam,
Is our inconstant shape,
Who now like knight and lady seem,
And now like dwarf and ape.

"It was between the night and day,
When the Fairy King has power,
That I sunk down in a sinful fray,
And 'twixt life and death was snatched away
To the joyless Elfin bower.

"But wist[15] I of a woman bold,
Who thrice my brow durst sign,[16]
I might regain my mortal mould,
As fair a form as thine."

[14] **conjure.** Call upon by oath. Distinguished from conjure (pr. kúnjur), meaning "to influence by magic."

[15] **wist I.** If I knew.

[16] **sign.** Make the sign of the cross upon my brow.

She crossed him once—she crossed him twice—
That lady was so brave;
The fouler grew his goblin hue,
The darker grew the cave.

She crossed him thrice, that lady bold;
He rose beneath her hand,
The fairest knight on Scottish mould,
Her brother, Ethert Brand!

Merry it is in good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle are singing,
But merrier were they in Dunfermline[17] gray,
When all the bells were ringing.

—*Scott.*

[17] **Dunfermline.** A town, about twenty miles from Edinburgh.

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself.
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain
And sings a melancholy strain.
Oh, listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
So sweetly to reposing bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands:
No sweeter voice was ever heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listen'd motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

—*Wordsworth.*

THE ISLAND OF THE SCOTS.

The Rhine is running deep and red, the island lies before,—
"Now is there one of all the host will dare to venture o'er?
For not alone the river's sweep might make a brave man quail;
The foe are on the further side, their shot comes fast as hail.
God help us, if the middle isle we may not hope to win;
Now is there any of the host will dare to venture in?"
"The ford is deep, the banks are steep, the island-shore lies wide;
Nor man nor horse could stem its force, or reach the further side.
See there! amidst the willow-boughs the serried[1] bayonets gleam;

---

[1] **serried,** crowded.

They've flung their bridge,—they've won the isle; the foe
have cross'd the stream!
Their volley flashes sharp and strong,—by all the saints! I trow
There never yet was soldier born could force that passage now!"

So spoke the bold French Mareschal[2] with him who led the van,
Whilst rough and red before their view the turbid river ran.
Nor bridge nor boat had they to cross the wild and swollen Rhine,
And thundering on the other bank far stretch'd the German line.
Hard by there stood a swarthy man, was leaning on his sword,
And a sadden'd smile lit up his face as he heard the Captain's word.
"I've seen a wilder stream ere now than that which rushes there;
I've stemm'd a heavier torrent yet and never thought to dare.
If German steel be sharp and keen, is ours not strong and true?
There may be danger in the deed, but there is honour too."

The old lord in his saddle turn'd, and hastily he said,
"Hath bold Duguesclin's[3] fiery heart awaken'd from the dead?
Thou art the leader of the Scots,—now well and sure I know,
That gentle blood in dangerous hour ne'er yet ran cold nor slow;

---

[2] **Mareschal.** Marshal, an officer of the highest rank in the French army.

[3] **Duguesclin.** A noted French commander, famous for his campaigns against the English in the 14th century.

And I have seen ye in the fight do all that mortal may:
If honour is the boon ye seek, it may be won this day,—
The prize is in the middle isle, there lies the adventurous way,
And armies twain are on the plain, the daring deed to see,—
Now ask thy gallant company if they will follow thee!"

Right gladsome look'd the Captain then, and nothing did he say,
But he turn'd him to his little band, O, few, I ween, were they!
The relics of the bravest force that ever fought in fray.
No one of all that company but bore a gentle name,
Not one whose fathers had not stood in Scotland's fields of fame.
All they had march'd with great Dundee[4] to where he fought and fell,
And in the deadly battle-strife had venged their leader well;
And they had bent the knee to earth when every eye was dim,
As o'er their hero's buried corpse they sang the funeral hymn;
And they had trod the Pass[5] once more, and stoop'd on either side.
To pluck the heather from the spot where he had dropp'd and died;
And they had bound it next their hearts, and ta'en a last farewell
Of Scottish earth and Scottish sky, where Scotland's glory fell.
Then went they forth to foreign lands like bent and broken men,
Who leave their dearest hope behind, and may not turn again.

---

[4] **Dundee.** John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, a Scottish soldier. He raised a body of Highlanders in 1689 to fight for James II against William of Orange. At the battle of Killecrankie (1689) he was mortally wounded.

[5] **The Pass.** The Pass of Killecrankie.

"The stream," he said, "is broad and deep, and stubborn is the foe,—
Yon island-strength is guarded well,—say, brothers, will ye go?
From home and kin for many a year our steps have wander'd wide,
And never may our bones be laid our fathers' graves beside.
No children have we to lament, no wives to wail our fall;
The traitor's and the spoiler's hand have reft our hearths of all.
But we have hearts, and we have arms, as strong to will and dare
As when our ancient banners flew within the northern air.
Come, brothers! let me name a spell shall rouse your souls again,
And send the old blood bounding free through pulse and heart and vein.
Call back the days of bygone years,—be young and strong once more;
Think yonder stream, so stark and red, is one we've cross'd before.

Rise, hill and glen! rise, crag and wood! rise up on either hand,—
Again upon the Garry's[6] banks, on Scottish soil we stand!
Again I see the tartans[7] wave, again the trumpets ring;
Again I hear our leader's call: 'Upon them for the King!'
Stay'd we behind that glorious day for roaring flood or linn[8]?
The soul of Græme is with us still,—now, brothers, will ye in?"
No stay,—no pause. With one accord, they grasp'd each other's hand,
Then plunged into the angry flood, that bold and dauntless band.

---

[6]Garry. A river in Perthshire, Scotland.
[7]tartan. A Scotch plaid.
[8]linn. A waterfall.

High flew the spray above their heads, yet onward still they bore,
Midst cheer, and shout, and answering yell, and shot, and cannon-roar,—
"Now, by the Holy Cross! I swear, since earth and sea began,
Was never such a daring deed essay'd by mortal man!"

Thick blew the smoke across the stream, and faster flash'd the flame:
The water plash'd in hissing jets as ball and bullet came.
Yet onward push'd the Cavaliers all stern and undismay'd,
With thousand armèd foes before, and none behind to aid.
Once, as they near'd the middle stream, so strong the torrent swept,
That scarce that long and living wall their dangerous footing kept.
Then rose a warning cry behind, a joyous shout before:
"The current's strong,—the way is long,—they'll never reach the shore!
See, see! they stagger in the midst, they waver in their line!
Fire on the madmen! break their ranks, and whelm them in the Rhine!"

Have you seen the tall trees swaying when the blast is sounding shrill,
And the whirlwind reels in fury down the gorges of the hill?
How they toss their mighty branches, struggling with the tempest's shock;
How they keep their place of vantage, cleaving firmly to the rock?
Even so the Scottish warriors held their own against the river;
Though the water flashed around them, not an eye was seen to quiver;

Though the shot flew sharp and deadly, not a man relax'd his hold;
For their hearts were big and thrilling with the mighty thoughts of old.
One word was spoken among them, and through the ranks it spread,—
"Remember our dead Claverhouse!" was all the Captain said.
Then, sternly bending forward, they wrestled on a while,
Until they clear'd the heavy stream, then rush'd toward the isle.

The German heart is stout and true, the German arm is strong;
The German foot goes seldom back where armed foemen throng.
But never had they faced in field so stern a charge before,
And never had they felt the sweep of Scotland's broad claymore.[9]
Not fiercer pours the avalanche adown the steep incline,
That rises o'er the parent springs of rough and rapid Rhine,—
Scarce swifter shoots the bolt from heaven, than came the Scottish band
Right up against the guarded trench, and o'er it, sword in hand.
In vain their leaders forward press,—they meet the deadly brand!

O lonely island of the Rhine,—Where seed was never sown,
What harvest lay upon thy sands, by those strong reapers thrown?
What saw the winter moon that night, as, struggling through the rain,
She pour'd a wan and fitful light on marsh, and stream, and plain?

[9] **claymore.** The heavy broadsword used by the Highlanders.

A dreary spot with corpses strewn, and bayonets glistening round;
A broken bridge, a stranded boat, a bare and batter'd mound;
And one huge watch-fire's kindled pile, that sent its quivering glare
To tell the leaders of the host the conquering Scots were there.

And did they twine the laurel-wreath,[10] for those who fought so well?
And did they honour those who liv'd, and weep for those who fell?
What meed of thanks was given to them let aged annals tell.
Why should they bring the laurel-wreath,—why crown the cup with wine?
It was not Frenchmen's blood that flow'd so freely on the Rhine,—
A stranger band of beggar'd men had done the venturous deed;
The glory was to France alone, the danger was their meed.
And what cared they for idle thanks from foreign prince and peer?
What virtue had such honey'd words the exiled heart to cheer?
What matter'd it that men should vaunt, and loud and fondly swear
That higher feat of chivalry was never wrought elsewhere?
They bore within their breast the grief that fame can never heal,—
The deep, unutterable woe which none save exiles feel.
Their hearts were yearning for the land they ne'er might see again,—
For Scotland's high and heather'd hills, for mountains, loch and glen—

[10] **laurel-wreath.** The laurel is an evergreen shrub found in parts of Europe. A wreath of laurel was a mark of distinction or honour.

For those who haply lay at rest beyond the distant sea,
Beneath the green and daisied turf where they would gladly be!
Long years went by. The lonely isle in Rhine's tempestuous flood
Has ta'en another name from those who bought it with their blood:
And, though the legend does not live,—for legends lightly die—
The peasant, as he sees the stream in winter rolling by,
And foaming o'er its channel-bed between him and the spot
Won by the warriors of the sword, still calls that deep and dangerous ford
The Passage of the Scot.

—*Aytoun.*

DICKENS IN CAMP.

Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting,
The river sang below;
The dim Sierras,[1] far beyond, uplifting
Their minarets of snow.

The roaring camp-fire, with rude humor, painted
The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form that drooped and fainted
In the fierce race for wealth;

Till one arose, and from his pack's scant treasure
A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure,
To hear the tale anew;

[1] **Sierra.** A Spanish term, meaning a mountain range. The name Sierra was applied, of course, to a great many different ranges.

And then, while round them shadows gathered faster,
And as the firelight fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the Master[2]
Had writ of "Little Nell."[3]

Perhaps 'twas boyish fancy,—for the reader
Was youngest of them all,—
But, as he read, from clustering pine and cedar
A silence seemed to fall;

The fir-trees, gathering closer in the shadows,
Listened in every spray,
While the whole camp, with "Nell," on English meadows
Wandered and lost their way.

And so in mountain solitudes—o'ertaken
As by some spell divine—
Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken
From out the gusty pine.

Lost is that camp, and wasted all its fire:
And he who wrought that spell?—
Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire,[4]
Ye have one tale[5] to tell!

---

[2] **the Master.** Dickens.

[3] **Little Nell.** The heroine of Dickens' novel, *The Old Curiosity Shop.*

[4] Dickens died at Gadshill, Kent, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

[5] **one tale.** Both they who heard the story, and he who wrote it, are dead.

Lost is that camp! but let its fragrant story[6]
Blend with the breath that thrills
With hop-vines' incense[7] all the pensive glory
That fills the Kentish hills.

And on that grave where English oak and holly
And laurel wreaths intwine,[8]
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly,—
This spray of Western pine.

—*Harte.*

[6] Let the fragrance of the western pine blend with the incense of the hop-vines in memory of Dickens. In other words, let me add this story as another tribute to his memory.

[7] **hop-vines' incense.** The smell of the hop-vines. Kent is the chief hop-growing county of England.

[8] The great writers of England have done honour to Dickens.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

I

What was he doing, the great god Pan,[1]
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin, and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

II

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep, cool bed of the river.
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

[1] **Pan.** In Greek mythology, the god of pastures, forests and flocks. He was represented as half-man, half-goat, in appearance. He was the inventor of the shepherd's flute.

III

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
  While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel, at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
  To prove it fresh from the river.

IV

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
  (How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor, dry, empty thing
  In holes, as he sat by the river.

V

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan,
  (Laughed while he sat by the river,)
"The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
  He blew in power by the river.

VI

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
  Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
  Came back to dream on the river.

VII

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods[2] sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

—*Mrs. Browning.*

[2] Pan was not one of the gods of Olympus, and was literally "half a beast."

GRADATIM.[1]

Heaven is not reached at a single bound;
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to the summit round by round.

I count this thing to be grandly true;
That a noble deed is a step toward God—
Lifting the soul from the common sod[2]
To a purer air and a broader view.

We rise by things that are under our feet;[3]
By what we have mastered of good and gain;
By the pride deposed and the passion slain,
And the vanquished ills that we hourly meet.

We hope, we aspire, we resolve, we trust,
When the *morning* calls us to life and light;
But our hearts grow weary, and ere the *night*,
Our lives are trailing the sordid[4] dust.

[1] **Gradatim.** A step at a time.
[2] **the common sod.** earthly things.
[3] See Longfellow, *The Ladder of Saint Augustine.*
[4] **sordid.** mean; base.

We hope, we resolve, we aspire, we pray,
And we think that we mount the air on wings
Beyond the recall of sensual things,
While our feet still cling to the heavy clay.

Wings for the angels, but feet for the men![5]
We may borrow the wings to find the way—
We may hope, and resolve, and aspire, and pray.
But our feet must rise, or we fall again.

Only in *dreams* is a ladder[6] thrown
From the weary earth to the sapphire walls;
But the dreams depart, and the vision falls,
And the sleeper wakes on his pillow of stone.

Heaven is not reached at a single bound;
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to the summit round by round.

—*Holland.*

---

[5] Good resolves and aspirations ("wings") are not sufficient. We can rise only step by step by overcoming the petty difficulties of everyday life.

[6] **ladder.** A reference to Jacob's ladder (Genesis xxviii, 12).

THE BATTLE OF THE LAKE REGILLUS.[1]

A LAY SUNG AT THE FEAST OF CASTOR AND POLLUX,[2]
ON THE IDES OF QUINTILIS,[3]
IN THE YEAR OF THE CITY CCCCLI (B.C. 303).

[*This is the feast of Castor and Pollux, and the anniversary of the battle of Lake Regillus, which they did so much to win. Let us remember them, and sing their praises.*]

I

Ho, trumpets, sound a war-note!
Ho, lictors,[4] clear the way!
The Knights[5] will ride, in all their pride,
Along the streets to-day.
To-day the doors and windows
Are hung with garlands all,
From Castor[6] in the Forum,[7]
To Mars without the wall.
Each Knight is robed in purple,
With olive each is crowned;
A gallant war-horse under each
Paws haughtily the ground.

[1] Ten years after the siege of Rome by Lars Porsena, the Latins, under Mamilius of Tusculum, made a last attempt to force the Romans to restore the Tarquin kings. A battle was fought at Lake Regillus (B.C. 498) between the Latins and the Romans, in which the Romans were successful. Lake Regillus has disappeared and its exact site is no longer known. It is supposed to have been situated at the foot of the Tusculan hills, about ten miles to the southeast of Rome.

[2] Castor and Pollux were twin deities, the sons of Zeus (or Jupiter). Their birthplace was Sparta, in Greece, and there they had their chief temple.

[3] **Ides of Quintilis.** The fifteenth of July.

[4] **lictors.** The body-guard of the magistrates, armed with rods and axes.

[5] **The Knights.** The cavalry.

[6] **Castor,** and **Mars.** The temples of Castor and of Mars.

[7] **Forum.** The market-place, or public square.

While flows the Yellow River,[8]
  While stands the Sacred Hill,[9]
The proud Ides of Quintilis,
  Shall have such honour still.
Gay are the Martian Kalends:[10]
  December's Nones[11] are gay:
But the proud Ides, when the squadron rides,
  Shall be Rome's whitest[12] day.

II

Unto the Great Twin Brethren
  We keep this solemn feast.
Swift, swift, the Great Twin Brethren
  Came spurring from the east.
They came o'er wild Parthenius[13]
  Tossing in waves of pine,
O'er Cirrha's dome,[14] o'er Adria's[15] foam,
  O'er purple Apennine,
From where with flutes and dances
  Their ancient mansion rings,
In lordly Lacedæmon,[16]
  The city of two kings,

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[8] **Yellow River.** The Tiber, so called from its yellow sands.

[9] **Sacred Hill.** A famous hill about three miles from Rome.

[10] **Martian Kalends.** The first of March, on which a feast to Juno was held.

[11] **December's Nones.** December the fifth, on which was held a feast to Faunus, a god of the flocks and herds.

[12] **whitest.** We should say "a red-letter day."

[13] **Parthenius.** A mountain range in Greece.

[14] **Cirrha's dome.** The dome of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, near Cirrha, in Greece.

[15] **Adria.** The Adriatic.

[16] **Lacedæmon.** Sparta, which was governed by two kings representing two great families.

To where, by Lake Regillus,
Under the Porcian[17] height,
All in the lands of Tusculum,
Was fought the glorious fight.

III

Now on the place of slaughter
Are cots and sheepfolds seen,
And rows of vines, and fields of wheat,
And apple-orchards green;
And swine crush the big acorns
That fall from Corne's[18] oaks.
Upon the turf by the Fair Fount[19]
The reaper's pottage smokes.
The fisher baits his angle;
The hunter twangs his bow;
Little they think on those strong limbs
That moulder deep below.
Little they think how sternly
That day the trumpets pealed;
How in the slippery swamp of blood
Warrior and war-horse reeled;
How wolves came with fierce gallop,
And crows on eager wings,
To tear the flesh of captains,
And peck the eyes of kings;
How thick the dead lay scattered
Under the Porcian height:
How through the gates of Tusculum
Raved the wild stream of flight;

[17] **Porcian height.** Monte Porzio, near the scene of the battle.
[18] **Corne.** A hill near Tusculum.
[19] **Fair Fount.** A spring in the vicinity.

And how the Lake Regillus
Bubbled with crimson foam,
What time the Thirty Cities[20]
Came forth to war with Rome.

IV

But, Roman, when thou standest
Upon that holy ground,
Look thou with heed on the dark rock
That girds the dark lake round,
So shalt thou see a hoof-mark[21]
Stamped deep into the flint:
It was no hoof of mortal steed
That made so strange a dint:
There to the Great Twin Brethren
Vow thou thy vows, and pray
That they, in tempest and in fight,
Will keep thy head alway.

[*The Latins send a message calling on the Romans to restore the Tarquins. The consul proudly refuses, and a dictator is appointed. The Roman army encamps hard by Lake Regillus.*]

V

Since last the Great Twin Brethren
Of mortal eyes were seen,
Have years gone by an hundred
And fourscore and thirteen.

[20] **Thirty Cities.** The Latin cities, banded together in aid of the Tarquins.

[21] "One spot on the margin of Lake Regillus was regarded during many ages with superstitious awe. A mark, resembling in shape a horse's hoof, was discernible in the volcanic rock; and this mark was believed to have been made by one of the celestial chargers."—*Macaulay.*

That summer a Virginius[22]
Was Consul first in place:[23]
The second was stout Aulus,
Of the Posthumian race.
The Herald of the Latines
From Gabii[24] came in state:
The Herald of the Latines
Passed through Rome's Eastern Gate:
The herald of the Latines
Did in our Forum stand;
And there he did his office,
A sceptre in his hand.

VI

"Hear, Senators and people
Of the good town of Rome,
The Thirty Cities charge you
To bring the Tarquins home:
And if ye still be stubborn,
To work the Tarquins wrong,
The Thirty Cities warn you,
Look that your walls be strong."

VII

Then spake the Consul Aulus,
He spake a bitter jest:
"Once the jay sent a message
Unto the eagle's nest:—
Now yield thou up thine eyrie
Unto the carrion-kite,

[22] **a Virginius.** One of the family of the Virginii.

[23] The consul who was elected first was usually held in greater honour than the other.

[24] **Gabii.** A Latin city about twelve miles from Rome.

Or come forth valiantly, and face
The jays in deadly fight.—
Forth looked in wrath the eagle;
And carrion-kite and jay,
Soon as they saw his beak and claw,
Fled screaming far away."

VIII

The Herald of the Latines
Hath hied him back in state;
The Fathers of the City
Are met in high debate.
Then spake the elder Consul,
An ancient man and wise:
"Now hearken, Conscript Fathers,[25]
To that which I advise.
In seasons of great peril
'Tis good that one bear sway;
Then choose we a Dictator,
Whom all men shall obey.
Camerium[26] knows how deeply
The sword of Aulus bites,
And all our city calls him
The man of seventy fights.
Then let him be Dictator
For six months and no more,
And have a Master of the Knights,[27]
And axes twenty-four."[28]

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[25] **Conscript Fathers.** The senate. The original expression is *patres conscripti* (*patres et conscripti*), *patres* referring to the patrician element, and conscripti to the plebeian element in the senate.

[26] **Camerium.** One of the Latin cities.

[27] **Master of the Knights.** Chief lieutenant.

[28] The Consuls usually had twelve lictors each; the Dictator twenty-four.

IX

So Aulus was Dictator,
The man of seventy fights ·
He made Æbutius Elva
His Master of the Knights.
On the third morn thereafter,
At dawning of the day,
Did Aulus and Æbutius
Set forth with their array.
Sempronius Atratinus
Was left in charge at home
With boys, and with grey-headed men,
To keep the walls of Rome.
Hard by the Lake Regillus
Our camp was pitched at night:
Eastward a mile the Latines lay,
Under the Porcian height.
Far over hill and valley
Their mighty host was spread;
And with their thousand watch-fires
The midnight sky was red.

[*The names of the towns which contributed to the Latin army of threescore thousand men, and their order of battle. All Latium was there to fight with Rome.*]

X

Up rose the golden morning
Over the Porcian height,
The proud Ides of Quintilis
Marked evermore with white.
Not without secret trouble
Our bravest saw the foes;
For girt by threescore thousand spears
The thirty standards rose.

From every warlike city
That boasts the Latian name,
Foredoòmed to dogs and vultures,
That gallant army came;
From Setia's purple vineyards,
From Norba's ancient wall,
From the white streets of Tusculum,
The proudest town of all;
From where the Witch's Fortress[29]
O'erhangs the dark-blue seas;
From the still glassy lake that sleeps
Beneath Aricia's trees—
Those trees in whose dim shadow
The ghastly priest[30] doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer,
And shall himself be slain;
From the drear banks of Ufens,[31]
Where flights of marsh-fowl play,
And buffaloes lie wallowing
Through the hot summer's day;
From the gigantic watch-towers,
No work of earthly men,
Whence Cora's sentinels o'erlook
The never-ending fen;
From the Laurentian[32] jungle,
The wild hog's reedy home;
From the green steeps whence Anio leaps
In floods of snow-white foam.

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[29] **Witch's Fortress.** The town of Circeii, which Macaulay associates here with Circe, the enchantress.

[30] **ghastly priest.** The temple of Diana, in a grove near Aricia, had for its priest a runaway slave, who was to hold office until slain by another runaway slave stronger than he.

[31] **Ufens.** A river.

[32] **Laurentian jungle.** Marshy thickets near the town of Laurentum.

XI

Aricia, Cora, Norba,
Velitrae, with the might
Of Setia and of Tusculum,
Were marshalled on the right:
The leader was Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name;
Upon his head a helmet
Of red gold shone like flame:
High on a gallant charger
Of dark-grey hue he rode:
Over his gilded armour
A vest of purple flowed,
Woven in the land of sunrise
By Syria's dark-browed daughters,
And by the sails of Carthage[33] brought
Far o'er the southern waters.

XII

Lavinium and Laurentum
Had on the left their post,
With all the banners of the marsh,
And banners of the coast.
Their leader was false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame:
With restless pace and haggard face
To his last field he came.
Men said he saw strange visions
Which none beside might see,
And that strange sounds were in his ears
Which none might hear but he.

[33] **Carthage.** On the north coast of Africa. The Carthaginians were a commercial and sea-faring people.

A woman[34] fair and stately,
But pale as are the dead,
Oft through the watches of the night
Sat spinning by his bed.
And as she plied the distaff,
In a sweet voice and low,
She sang of great old houses,
And fights fought long ago.
So spun she, and so sang she,
Until the east was grey,
Then pointed to her bleeding breast,
And shrieked, and fled away.

XIII

But in the centre thickest
Were ranged the shields of foes,
And from the centre loudest
The cry of battle rose.
There Tibur[35] marched and Pedum
Beneath proud Tarquin's rule,
And Ferentinum of the rock,
And Gabii of the pool.
There rode the Volscian succours:
There, in a dark stern ring,
The Roman exiles gathered close,
Around the ancient king.
Though white as Mount Soracte,[36]
When winter nights are long,
His beard flowed down o'er mail and belt,
His heart and hand were strong:

[34] **a woman.** Lucretia. After she had been wronged by Sextus, she stabbed herself and died.

[35] **Tibur.** The modern city of Tivoli.

[36] **Soracte.** A snow-capped mountain about twenty-five miles from Rome.

Under his hoary eyebrows
Still flashed forth quenchless rage,
And, if the lance shook in his gripe,
'Twas more with hate than age.
Close at his side was Titus
On an Apulian[37] steed,
Titus, the youngest Tarquin,
Too good for such a breed.

[*The battle begins. False Sextus flees from Herminius, one of the defenders of the bridge. Æbutius slays Tubero, but is severely wounded by Mamilius of Tusculum, and retires from the fight.*]

XIV

Now on each side the leaders
Gave signal for the charge;
And on each side the footmen
Strode on with lance and targe;[38]
And on each side the horsemen
Struck their spurs deep in gore;
And front to front the armies
Met with a mighty roar:
And under that great battle
The earth with blood was red;
And, like the Pomptine[39] fog at morn,
The dust hung overhead;
And louder still and louder
Rose from the darkened field
The braying of the war-horns,
The clang of sword and shield,
The rush of squadrons sweeping
Like whirlwinds o'er the plain,
The shouting of the slayers,
And screeching of the slain.

[37] **Apulian.** Apulia was one of the divisions of Italy.

[38] **targe.** shield.

[39] **Pomptine.** The Pontine marshes in the southern part of Latium.

XV

False Sextus rode out foremost:
His look was high and bold;
His corslet was of bison's hide,
Plated with steel and gold.
As glares the famished eagle
From the Digentian rock[40]
On a choice lamb that bounds alone
Before Bandusia's[41] flock,
Herminius glared on Sextus,
And came with eagle speed,
Herminius on black Auster,[42]
Brave champion on brave steed;
In his right hand the broadsword
That kept the bridge so well,
And on his helm the crown[43] he won
When proud Fidenae fell.
Woe to the maid whose lover
Shall cross his path to-day!
False Sextus saw, and trembled,
And turned, and fled away.
As turns, as flies, the woodman
In the Calabrian[44] brake,
When through the reeds gleams the round eye
Of that fell speckled snake;
So turned, so fled, false Sextus,
And hid him in the rear,
Behind the dark Lavinian ranks,
Bristling with crest and spear.

[40] **Digentian rock.** A crag near the river Digentia.

[41] **Bandusia.** A fountain.

[42] **Auster.** The word signifies "the stormy south wind."

[43] **crown.** The first Roman to scale the walls of a besieged town received a crown of gold.

[44] **Calabrian.** Calabria forms the "heel" of Italy.

XVI

But far to north Æbutius,
The Master of the Knights,
Gave Tubero of Norba
To feed the Porcian kites.
Next under those red horse-hoofs
Flaccus of Setia lay;
Better had he been pruning
Among his elms[45] that day.
Mamilius saw the slaughter,
And tossed his golden crest,
And towards the Master of the Knights
Through the thick battle pressed.
Æbutius smote Mamilius
So fiercely on the shield
That the great lord of Tusculum
Well nigh rolled on the field.
Mamilius smote Æbutius,
With a good aim and true,
Just where the neck and shoulder join,
And pierced him through and through;
And brave Æbutius Elva
Fell swooning to the ground:
But a thick wall of bucklers
Encompassed him around.
His clients[46] from the battle
Bare him some little space,
And filled a helm from the dark lake,
And bathed his brow and face;

[45] Pruning the vines entwined around the trunks of the elms.
[46] **clients.** Servants attached to the Patrician families.

And when at last he opened
His swimming eyes to light,
Men say, the earliest word he spake
Was, "Friends, how goes the fight?"

[*The struggle in the centre, where the ancient Tarquin is struck down. The Latins fight over him as he lies, and Titus kills Valerius, round whose body the struggle waxes hot.*]

XVII

But meanwhile in the centre
Great deeds of arms were wrought;
There Aulus the Dictator
And there Valerius fought.
Aulus with his good broadsword
A bloody passage cleared
To where, amidst the thickest foes,
He saw the long white beard.
Flat lighted that good broadsword
Upon proud Tarquin's head.
He dropped the lance: he dropped the reins:
He fell as fall the dead.
Down Aulus springs to slay him,
With eyes like coals of fire;
But faster Titus[47] hath sprung down,
And hath bestrode his sire.
Latian captains, Roman knights,
Fast down to earth they spring,
And hand to hand they fight on foot
Around the ancient king.
First Titus gave tall Caeso
A death wound in the face;
Tall Caeso was the bravest man
Of the brave Fabian[48] race:

[47] **Titus.** Son of Tarquin the Proud.

[48] **Fabian.** The Fabii were a famous Roman family.

Aulus slew Rex of Gabii,
The priest of Juno's shrine:
Valerius smote down Julius,
Of Rome's great Julian line;[49]
Julius, who left his mansion
High on the Velian hill,[50]
And through all turns of weal and woe
Followed proud Tarquin still.
Now right across proud Tarquin
A corpse was Julius laid;
And Titus groaned with rage and grief,
And at Valerius made.
Valerius struck at Titus,
And lopped off half his crest;
But Titus stabbed Valerius
A span deep in the breast.
Like a mast snapped by the tempest,
Valerius reeled and fell.
Ah! woe is me for the good house
That loves the people well!
Then shouted loud the Latines;
And with one rush they bore
The struggling Romans backward
Three lances' length and more:
And up they took proud Tarquin,
And laid him on a shield,
And four strong yeoman bare him,
Still senseless from the field.

XVIII

But fiercer grew the fighting
Around Valerius dead;
For Titus dragged him by the foot,
And Aulus by the head.

[49] The Julian house claimed to be descended from Iulus, son of Aeneas.

[50] **Velian hill.** The Velian hill was not far from the Forum in Rome.

"On, Latines, on!" quoth Titus,
"See how the rebels fly!"
"Romans, stand firm!" quoth Aulus,
"And win this fight or die!
They must not give Valerius
To raven and to kite;
For aye Valerius loathed the wrong,
And aye upheld the right:
And for your wives and babies
In the front rank he fell.
Now play the men for the good house
That loves the people well!"

XIX

Then tenfold round the body
The roar of battle rose,
Like the roar of a burning forest,
When a strong north wind blows.
Now backward, and now forward,
Rocked furiously the fray,
Till none could see Valerius,
And none wist where he lay.
For shivered arms and ensigns
Were heaped there in a mound,
And corpses stiff, and dying men
That writhed and gnawed the ground;
And wounded horses kicking,
And snorting purple foam:
Right well did such a couch befit
A Consular of Rome.

[*Mamilius is seen coming to the aid of the Latins. Cossus gallops off to summon Herminius, who comes at once. Mamilius flings himself athwart his course, and both champions are slain.*]

XX

But north looked the Dictator;
North looked he long and hard;
And spake to Caius Cossus,
The Captain of his Guard:
"Caius, of all the Romans
Thou hast the keenest sight;
Say, what through yonder storm of dust
Comes from the Latian right?"

XXI

Then answered Caius Cossus
"I see an evil sight;
The banner of proud Tusculum
Comes from the Latian right:
I see the pluméd horsemen;
And far before the rest
I see the dark-grey charger,
I see the purple vest;
I see the golden helmet
That shines far off like flame;
So ever rides Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name."

XXII

"Now hearken, Caius Cossus:
Spring on thy horse's back;
Ride as the wolves of Apennine
Were all upon thy track;
Haste to our southward battle:
And never draw thy rein
Until thou find Herminius,
And bid him come amain."

XXIII

So Aulus spake, and turned him
  Again to that fierce strife;
And Caius Cossus mounted,
  And rode for death and life.
Loud clanged beneath his horse-hoofs
  The helmets of the dead,
And many a curdling pool of blood
  Splashed him from heel to head.
So came he far to southward,
  Where fought the Roman host,
Against the banners of the marsh
  And banners of the coast.
Like corn before the sickle
  The stout Lavinians fell,
Beneath the edge of the true sword
  That kept the bridge so well.

XXIV

"Herminius: Aulus greets thee;
  He bids thee come with speed,
To help our central battle:
  For sore is there our need.
There wars the youngest Tarquin,
  And there the Crest of Flame,[51]
The Tusculan Mamilius,
  Prince of the Latian name.
Valerius hath fallen fighting
  In front of our array:
And Aulus of the seventy fields
  Alone upholds the day."

[51] **Crest of Flame.** The flaming crest on the helmet of Mamilius. See l. 434.

XXV

Herminius beat his bosom:
  But never a word he spake.
He clapped his hand on Auster's mane,
  He gave the reins a shake:
Away, away went Auster,
  Like an arrow from the bow:
Black Auster was the fleetest steed
  From Aufidus to Po.[52]

XXVI

Right glad were all the Romans
  Who, in that hour of dread,
Against great odds bare up the war
  Around Valerius dead,
When from the south the cheering
  Rose with a mighty swell;
"Herminius comes, Herminius,
  Who kept the bridge so well!"

XXVII

Mamilius spied Herminius,
  And dashed across the way.
"Herminius! I have sought thee
  Through many a bloody day.
One of us two, Herminius,
  Shall never more go home,
I will lay on for Tusculum,
  And lay thou on for Rome!"

[52] **From Aufidus to Po.** In all Italy. Aufidus was a river in the south of Italy; Po, a river in the north.

XXVIII

All round them paused the battle,
While met in mortal fray
The Roman and the Tusculan,
The horses black and grey.
Herminius smote Mamilius
Through breast-plate and through breast;
And fast flowed out the purple blood
Over the purple vest.
Mamilius smote Herminius
Through head-piece and through head;
And side by side those chiefs of pride
Together fell down dead.
Down fell they dead together
In a great lake of gore;
And still stood all who saw them fall
While men might count a score.

[*Mamilius' charger dashes off to Tusculum, Black Auster remains by his master's body. Titus attempts to mount him, but is slain by Aulus the Dictator.*]

XXIX

Fast, fast, with heels wild spurning,
The dark-grey charger fled:
He burst through ranks of fighting men;
He sprang o'er heaps of dead.
His bridle far out-streaming,
His flanks all blood and foam,
He sought the southern mountains,
The mountains of his home.
The pass was steep and rugged,
The wolves they howled and whined;
But he ran like a whirlwind up the pass,
And he left the wolves behind.

Through many a startled hamlet
Thundered his flying feet;
He rushed through the gate of Tusculum,
He rushed up the long white street;
He rushed by tower and temple,
And paused not from his race
Till he stood before his master's door
In the stately market-place.
And straightway round him gathered
A pale and trembling crowd,
And when they knew him, cries of rage
Brake forth, and wailing loud:
And women rent their tresses
For their great prince's fall;
And old men girt on their old swords,
And went to man the wall.

XXX

But, like a graven image,
Black Auster kept his place,
And ever wistfully he looked
Into his master's face.
The raven-mane that daily,
With pats and fond caresses,
The young Herminia washed and combed,
And twined in even tresses,
And decked with coloured ribands
From her own gay attire,
Hung sadly o'er her father's corpse
In carnage and in mire.
Forth with a shout sprang Titus,
And seized Black Auster's rein.
Then Aulus sware a fearful oath,
And ran at him amain.

"The furies of thy brother[53]
With me and mine abide,
If one of your accursed house
Upon black Auster ride!"
As on an Alpine watch-tower
From heaven comes down the flame,
Full on the neck of Titus
The blade of Aulus came:
And out the red blood spouted,
In a wide arch and tall,
As spouts a fountain in the court
Of some rich Capuan's[54] hall.
The knees of all the Latines
Were loosened with dismay
When dead, on dead Herminius,
The bravest Tarquin lay.

[*Aulus prepares to mount black Auster, when he spies two strange horsemen by his side. These are Castor and Pollux, who charge at the head of the Roman army.*]

XXXI

And Aulus the Dictator
Stroked Auster's raven mane,
With heed he looked unto the girths,
With heed unto the rein.
"Now bear me well, black Auster,
Into yon thick array;
And thou and I will have revenge
For thy good lord this day."

[53] **thy brother.** False Sextus, supposed to be haunted by the furies (the Greek goddesses of vengeance) for his crime.

[54] **Capuan.** Capua was a luxurious city in southern Italy.

XXXII

So spake he; and was buckling
Tighter black Auster's band,
When he was aware of a princely pair
That rode at his right hand.
So like they were, no mortal
Might one from other know:
White as snow their armour was;
Their steeds were white as snow.
Never on earthly anvil
Did such rare armour gleam;
And never did such gallant steeds
Drink of an earthly stream.

XXXIII

And all who saw them trembled,
And pale grew every cheek;
And Aulus the Dictator
Scarce gathered voice to speak.
"Say by what name men call you?
What city is your home?
And wherefore ride ye in such guise
Before the ranks of Rome?"

XXXIV

"By many names men call us;
In many lands we dwell:
Well Samothracia[55] knows us;
Cyrene knows us well.
Our house in gay Tarentum[56]
Is hung each morn with flowers:

[55] **Samothracia.** An island in the Aegean, where Castor and Pollux were worshipped.

[56] **Tarentum.** A Greek town in the south of Italy.

High o'er the masts of Syracuse[57]
Our marble portal towers;
But by the proud Eurotas[58]
Is our dear native home;
And for the right we come to fight
Before the ranks of Rome."

XXXV

So answered those strange horsemen,
And each couched low his spear;
And forthwith all the ranks of Rome
Were bold, and of good cheer:
And on the thirty armies
Came wonder and affright,
And Ardea wavered on the left,
And Cora on the right.
"Rome to the charge!" cried Aulus;
"The foe begins to yield!
Charge for the hearth of Vesta![59]
Charge for the Golden Shield![60]
Let no man stop to plunder,
But slay, and slay, and slay:
The Gods who live forever
Are on our side to-day."

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[57] **Syracuse.** An important city in Sicily.

[58] **Eurotas.** A river in Greece, flowing past the city of Sparta.

[59] **Vesta.** The goddess of the hearth.

[60] **Golden Shield.** The shield of Mars which had fallen from heaven during the reign of Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome.

[*The Latins turn and flee. Many of their chiefs are slain, and above all false Sextus, who dies a coward's death.*]

XXXVI

Then the fierce trumpet-flourish
From earth to heaven arose.
The kites know well the long stern swell
That bids the Romans close.
Then the good sword of Aulus
Was lifted up to slay:
Then, like a crag down Apennine,
Rushed Auster through the fray.
But under those strange horsemen
Still thicker lay the slain:
And after those strange horses
Black Auster toiled in vain.
Behind them Rome's long battle
Came rolling on the foe,
Ensigns dancing wild above,
Blades all in line below.
So comes the Po in flood-time
Upon the Celtic plain:[61]
So comes the squall, blacker than night,
Upon the Adrian main.
Now, by our Sire Quirinus,[62]
It was a goodly sight
To see the thirty standards
Swept down the tide of flight.
So flies the spray of Adria
When the black squall doth blow,
So corn-sheaves in the flood-time
Spin down the whirling Po.

[61] **Celtic plain.** The north of Italy, inhabited by Celtic tribes.
[62] **Sire Quirinus.** Romulus, the founder of Rome.

False Sextus to the mountains
  Turned first his horse's head;
And fast fled Ferentinum,
  And fast Lanuvium, fled.
The horsemen of Nomentum
  Spurred hard out of the fray,
The footmen of Velitrae
  Threw shield and spear away.
And underfoot was trampled,
  Amidst the mud and gore,
The banner of proud Tusculum,
  That never stooped before:
And down went Flavius Faustus,
  Who led his stately ranks
From where the apple-blossoms wave
  On Anio's echoing banks,
And Tullus of Arpinum,
  Chief of the Volscian aids,
And Metius with the long fair curls,
  The love of Anxur's maids,
And the white head of Vulso,
  The great Arician seer,
And Nepos of Laurentum,
  The hunter of the deer;
And in the back false Sextus
  Felt the good Roman steel;
And wriggling in the dust he died,
  Like a worm beneath the wheel:
And fliers and pursuers
  Were mingled in a mass;
And far away the battle
  Went roaring through the pass.

[*The Dioscuri ride to Rome with news of victory. No one dares to ask who they are, and after washing their steeds in Vesta's fountain they vanish from mortal sight.*]

XXXVII

Sempronius Atratinus
Sate in the Eastern Gate,
Beside him were three Fathers,
Each in his chair of state;
Fabius, whose nine stout grandsons
That day were in the field,
And Manlius, eldest of the Twelve[63]
Who kept the Golden Shield;
And Sergius, the High Pontiff,[64]
For wisdom far renowned;
In all Etruria's colleges
Was no such Pontiff found.
And all around the portal,
And high above the wall,
Stood a great throng of people,
But sad and silent all;
Young lads, and stooping elders
That might not bear the mail,
Matrons with lips that quivered,
And maids with faces pale.
Since the first gleam of daylight,
Sempronius had not ceased
To listen for the rushing
Of horse-hoofs from the east.
The mist of eve was rising.
The sun was hastening down,

[63] **The Twelve.** In order to prevent the shield of Mars from being stolen, eleven others were made after the same pattern, and twelve priests were appointed to guard the twelve shields.

[64] **High Pontiff.** The chief priest.

When he was aware of a princely pair
  Fast pricking towards the town.
So like they were, man never
  Saw twins so like before;
Red with gore their armour was,
  Their steeds were red with gore.

XXXVIII

"Hail to the great Asylum![65]
  Hail to the hill-tops seven!
Hail to the fire[66] that burns for aye!
  And the shield that fell from heaven!
This day, by Lake Regillus,
  Under the Porcian height,
All in the lands of Tusculum
  Was fought a glorious fight.
To-morrow your Dictator
  Shall bring in triumph home
The spoils of thirty cities
  To deck the shrines of Rome!"

XXXIX

Then burst from that great concourse
  A shout that shook the towers,
And some ran north, and some ran south,
  Crying, "The day is ours!"
But on rode these strange horsemen,
  With slow and lordly pace;
And none who saw their bearing
  Durst ask their name or race.

[65] **Asylum.** Romulus was said to have promised a refuge to all fugitives, in the newly-founded city of Rome.

[66] **the fire.** In the temple of Vesta.

On rode they to the Forum,
While laurel-boughs and flowers,
From house-tops and from windows,
Fell on their crests in showers.
When they drew nigh to Vesta,
They vaulted down amain,
And washed their horses in the well
That springs by Vesta's fane.
And straight again they mounted,
And rode to Vesta's door;
Then, like a blast, away they passed,
And no man saw them more.

[*The Pontiff tells the Romans who their god-like visitors are, and bids the citizens build a temple to them and establish an annual procession in their honour.*]

XL

And all the people trembled,
And pale grew every cheek;
And Sergius the High Pontiff
Alone found voice to speak:
"The gods who live for ever
Have fought for Rome to-day!
These be the Great Twin Brethren
To whom the Dorians[67] pray.
Back comes the Chief in triumph,
Who, in the hour of fight,
Hath seen the Great Twin Brethren
In harness on his right.
Safe comes the ship to haven,
Through billows and through gales,

[67] **Dorians.** The Spartans belonged to the Dorian branch of the Greek people.

If once the Great Twin Brethren
Sit shining on the sails.[68]
Wherefore they washed their horses
In Vesta's holy well,
Wherefore they rode to Vesta's door,
I know, but may not tell.
Here, hard by Vesta's Temple,
Build we a stately dome
Unto the Great Twin Brethren
Who fought so well for Rome.
And when the months returning
Bring back this day of fight,
The proud Ides of Quintilis,
Marked evermore with white,
Unto the Great Twin Brethren
Let all the people throng,
With chaplets and with offerings,
With music and with song;
And let the doors and windows
Be hung with garlands all,
And let the Knights be summoned
To Mars without the wall:
Thence let them ride in purple
With joyous trumpet-sound,
Each mounted on his war-horse,
And each with olive crowned;
And pass in solemn order
Before the sacred dome,
Where dwell the Great Twin Brethren
Who fought so well for Rome!"

—*Macaulay.*

[68] Castor and Pollux were the special guardians of sailors at sea. When, during a thunderstorm, a light played around the masts and sails of the ship, Castor and Pollux were supposed to be present, watching over the fortunes of the vessel.

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL.

Prelude to Part First.

Over his keys the musing organist,
  Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they list,
  And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay:
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument
  Gives hopes and fervor, nearer draws his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent
  Along the wavering vista of his dream.[1]

  Not only around our infancy
  Doth heaven with all its splendors lie;
  Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
  We Sinais[2] climb and know it not;
Over our manhood bend the skies;
  Against our fallen and traitor lives
The great winds utter prophecies;
  With our faint hearts the mountain strives;
Its arms outstretched, the druid[3] wood
  Waits with its benedicite:[4]
And to our age's drowsy blood
  Still shouts the inspiring sea.[5]

[1] Just as the organist gets into the spirit of his theme by means of a dreamy prelude, so the poet by means of this introduction intends to suggest the spirit of the poem that follows.

[2] **Sinais.** See Exodus, xix and xx.

[3] **druid.** The druids were the priests of the ancient Celts.

[4] **benedicite.** Blessing, benediction.

[5] No matter how engrossed we may be with worldly things, Nature is always influencing us for good.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives[6] us,
We bargain for the graves we lie in;
At the Devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,[7]
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's tasking;
'T is heaven alone that is given away,
'T is only God may be had for the asking;
There is no price set on the lavish summer,
And June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays:
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, grasping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul for grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf or a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace;

---

[6] **shrives.** Hears confession and grants absolution.

[7] We give our lives in pursuit of foolish things. The cap and bells was a part of the costume of the court jester.

The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest,—
In the nice[8] ear of nature which song is the best?

Now is the high-tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbed away
Comes flooding back, with a ripply cheer,
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay;
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
We are happy now because God so wills it;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves are green:
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is growing;
The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
That dandelions are blossoming near,
That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house hard by:
And if the breeze kept the good news back,
For other couriers we should not lack;
We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing,—
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,[9]
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
Tells all in his lusty crowing!

[8] nice. discriminating, able to make fine distinctions.
[9] chanticleer. A crowing cock. The bird that "sings clear."

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;
Everything is happy now,
Everything is upward striving;
'T is as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,—
'T is the natural way of living;
Who knows whither the clouds have fled?
In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,
The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;
The soul partakes the season's youth,
And the sulphurous rifts[10] of passion and woe
Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,
Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.
What wonder if Sir Launfal[11] now
Remembered the keeping of his vow?

Part First.

I

"My golden spurs now bring to me,
And bring to me my richest mail,
For to-morrow I go over land and sea
In search of the Holy Grail;[12]

---

[10] **rifts.** Literally, clefts or fissures; used metaphorically here with reference to the effects of "passion and woe" on the soul.

[11] **Sir Launfal.** A knight of King Arthur's Round Table.

[12] **Holy Grail.** According to legend, the Holy Grail is the cup or bowl from which Christ drank at the Last Supper, and which was used by Joseph of Arimathea to receive the blood from Christ's wounds when his body was removed from the cross. The Grail was taken to England by Joseph of Arimathea, and at his death it remained in the keeping of his descendants. But in the course of time, owing to the impurity of life of its guardians, the Grail disappeared; and thereafter it appeared only to those whose lives were free from sin. The search for the Grail was undertaken by many of the knights of the Round Table, but only one knight, Sir Galahad, was pure enough to see the vision.

Shall never a bed for me be spread.
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
Till I begin my vow to keep;
Here on the rushes[13] will I sleep,
And perchance there may come a vision true
Ere day create the world anew."
Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
And into his soul the vision flew.

II

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees,
The little birds sang as if it were
The one day of summer in all the year
And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees·
The castle alone in the landscape lay
Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray;
'T was the proudest hall in the North Countree,[14]
And never its gates might opened be,
Save to lord or lady of high degree;
Summer besieged it on every side,
But the churlish stone her assaults defied;
She could not scale the chilly wall,
Though round it for leagues her pavilions tall[15]
Stretched left and right,
Over the hills and out of sight;
Green and broad was every tent,
And out of each a murmur went
Till the breeze fell off at night.

[13] **rushes.** Rushes were used in Mediæval times to strew the floors of the feudal castles.

[14] **North Countree.** The north of England.

[15] **Pavilion and tent,** as here used, refer to the trees.

III

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
And through the dark arch a charger sprang,
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall
In his siege of three hundred summers long,
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,
Had cast them forth; so, young and strong,
And lightsome as a locust leaf,
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail,
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

IV

It was morning on hill and stream and tree,
And morning in the young knight's heart;
Only the castle moodily
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,
And gloomed by itself apart;
The season brimmed all other things up
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

V

As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome gate,
He was ware of a leper, crouched by the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate;
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came,
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armor did shrink and crawl.
And midway its leap his heart stood still
Like a frozen waterfall;
For this man, so foul and bent of stature,
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the summer morn,—
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

VI

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:
"Better to me the poor man's crust,
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his door;
That is no true alms which the hand can hold;
He gives nothing but worthless gold
Who gives from a sense of duty;
But he who gives a slender mite,[16]
And gives to that which is out of sight,
That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all unite,—
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it store[17]
To the soul that was starving in darkness before."

PRELUDE TO PART SECOND.

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand summers old:
On open wold and hill-top bleak
It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like a sheet on the wanderer's cheek;
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare;
The little brook heard it and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof:
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined[18] his arches and matched his beams;
Slender and clear were his crystal spars
As the lashes of light that trim the stars;

[16] See Luke, xxi, 1-4.

[17] **store.** plenty.

[18] **groined.** The groin is the line made by the intersection of two arches.

He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight;
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt.[19]
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees
Bending to counterfeit a breeze;
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
But silvery mosses that downward grew;
Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief[20]
With quaint arabesques[21] of ice-fern leaf;
Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear
For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and here
He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
And hung them thickly with diamond drops,
Which crystalled the beams of moon and sun,
And made a star of every one:
No mortal builder's most rare device
Could match this winter-palace of ice;
'T was as if every image that mirrored lay
In his depths serene through the summer day,
Each flitting shadow of earth snd sky,
Lest the happy model should be lost,
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
By the elfin builders of the frost.

Within the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas glow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel[22] and rafter
With the lightsome green of ivy and holly;

[19] **crypt.** A subterranean cell or chapel.

[20] **relief.** Figures are said to be in relief when they project or stand out from the ground on which they are formed.

[21] **arabesques.** A style of ornament, representing flowers, fruit, and foliage, adopted from the Arabs.

[22] **corbel.** A projection from the face of a wall, supporting an arch or rafter above.

Through the deep gulf[23] of the chimney wide
Wallows the Yule-log's[24] roaring tide;
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind;
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
Hunted to death in its galleries blind;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
Like herds of startled deer.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,
And rattles and wrings
The icy strings,
Singing, in dreary monotone,
A Christmas carol of its own,
Whose burden[25] still, as he might guess,
Was—"Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"

The voice of the seneschal[26] flared like a torch
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night
The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
Through the window-slits of the castle old,
Build out its piers of ruddy light
Against the drift of the cold.

---

[23] **gulf.** The opening, or throat, of the chimney.

[24] **Yule-log.** A great log of wood laid, in ancient times, across the hearth-fire on Christmas Eve.

[25] **burden.** refrain.

[26] **seneschal.** High-steward; the officer who had charge of feasts and other ceremonies.

Part Second.

I

There was never a leaf on bush or tree
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly;
The river was dumb and could not speak,
For the frost's swift shuttles its shroud had spun;
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun;
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitly
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

II

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate,
For another heir in his earldom sate;
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail;
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
No more on his surcoat[27] was blazoned the cross,
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,
For it was just at the Christmas time;
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
In the light and warmth of long ago;[28]

---

[27] **surcoat.** A cloak worn over the armour of a knight. The surcoat of a Christian knight was generally white, with a large red cross displayed conspicuously ("blazoned") upon it.

[28] He tried to forget the cold and snow, by calling to mind pictures of the hot desert.

He sees the snake-like caravan crawl
O'er the edge of the desert, black and small,
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,
He can count the camels in the sun,
As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,
The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade,
And with its own self like an infant played,
And waved its signal of palms.

IV

"For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an alms;"
The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees naught save the grewsome thing,[29]
The leper, lank as the rain-blanched bone,
That cowered beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas
In the desolate horror of his disease.

V

And Sir Launfal said,—"I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree;[30]
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,—
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns.
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side;
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

VI

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he
Remembered in what a haughtier guise
He had flung an alms to leprosie,

[29] **grewsome.** horrible, hideous.
[30] **tree.** the cross.

When he caged his young life up in gilded mail
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail,
The heart within him was ashes and dust;
He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink;
'T was a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'T was water out of a wooden bowl,—
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 't was red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

VII

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—[31]
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.[31]

VIII

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
Which mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
"Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou has spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold it is here,—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;

[31] **Beautiful Gate.** See John, x, 7.

[31] **temple of God in Man.** "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" I Cor., vi, 19.

This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;[32]
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need,—
Not that which we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

IX

Sir Launfal awoke, as from a swound:—
"The Grail in my castle here is found!
Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
Let it be the spider's banquet-hall;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail."

X

The castle-gate stands open now,
And the wanderer is welcome to the hall
As the hangbird[33] is to the elm-tree bough;
No longer scowl the turrets tall,
The Summer's long siege at last is o'er;
When the first poor outcast went in at the door,
She entered with him in disguise,
And mastered the fortress by surprise;
There is no spot she loves so well on ground.
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
Has hall and bower at his command;
And there's no poor man in the North Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

—*Lowell.*

[32] See Luke, xxii, 19, 20.

[33] **hangbird.** oriole.

THE BUILDERS.

All are architects of Fate,
  Working in these walls of Time;[1]
Some with massive deeds and great,
  Some with ornaments of rhyme.

Nothing useless is, or low;
  Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show
  Strengthens and supports the rest.

For the structure that we raise,
  Time is with materials filled;
Our to-days and yesterdays
  Are the blocks with which we build.

Truly shape and fashion these;
  Leave no yawning gaps between;
Think not, because no man sees,
  Such things will remain unseen.

In the elder days of Art,
  Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part;
  For the Gods see everywhere.

Let us do our work as well,
  Both the unseen and the seen;
Make the house, where Gods may dwell,
  Beautiful, entire and clean.

Else our lives are incomplete,
  Standing in these walls of Time,
Broken stairways, where the feet
  Stumble as they seek to climb.

[1] The figure seems to be that of a great edifice (Time) within which we are building stairways (our lives) which enable us to rise to higher levels.

Build to-day, then, strong and sure;
With a firm and ample base
And ascending and secure
Shall to-morrow find its place.

Thus alone can we attain
To those turrets, where the eye
Sees the world as one vast plain,
And one boundless reach of sky.[2]

—*Longfellow.*

[2] We gain a broader outlook on life.

BRITISH FREEDOM.[1]

It is not to be thought of that the flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flow'd "with pomp of waters unwithstood"—[2]
Roused though it be full often to a mood,
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous stream in bogs and sands
Should perish,[3] and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old:
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakspeare spake—the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held. In everything we're sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

—*Wordsworth.*

[1] Written in 1802 or 1803, when an invasion of England by Napoleon was expected.

[2] This phrase is quoted from a poem by Daniel, an Elizabethan poet.

[3] **in bogs and sands should perish.** Should be destroyed by Napoleon.

THE COURTSHIP OF MILES STANDISH.[1]

I

MILES STANDISH.

In the Old Colony days, in Plymouth the land of the Pilgrims,[2]
To and fro in a room of his simple and primitive dwelling,
Clad in doublet[3] and hose, and boots of Cordovan[4] leather,
Strode, with a martial air, Miles Standish the Puritan Captain.
Buried in thought he seemed, with his hands behind him, and pausing
Ever and anon to behold his glittering weapons of warfare.
Hanging in shining array along the walls of the chamber,—
Cutlass and corselet[5] of steel, and his trusty sword of Damascus,[6]
Curved at the point and inscribed with its mystical[7] Arabic sentence,

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[1] **Miles Standish** was born about 1580, the son of a Lancashire gentleman of a large estate. He entered the army of Queen Elizabeth and served for some time in the Netherlands. There he met the congregation of English Puritans with their pastor, Robinson, and although he did not become a member of their Church, he sailed with them in the Mayflower in 1620. He was entrusted with the defence of the new colony, and held, besides, other offices of trust in the community. In 1630 he removed from Plymouth and settled in Duxbury, where he died in 1656.

[2] The Mayflower, in which the Pilgrim Fathers set sail for America, reached Cape Cod in November, 1620. Some weeks were spent in exploring the coast, but finally, towards the end of December, the Mayflower anchored in Plymouth Harbour, and it was decided that they should make a landing and found a settlement there. The name of "Old Colony" was for a long time applied to the settlement about Plymouth.

[3] **doublet.** A close-fitting garment for men, covering the body from the neck to the waist.

[4] **Cordovan leather.** A goatskin leather, prepared in Cordova, Spain.

[5] **Cutlass.** A short curved sword used by sailors. **corselet.** Armour for the body; breastplate.

[6] **Damascus.** A city in Syria, famous for its steel blades.

[7] **mystical.** Obscure and mysterious in meaning.

While underneath, in a corner, were fowling-piece, musket, and matchlock.[8]
Short of stature he was, but strongly built and athletic,
Broad in the shoulders, deep-chested, with muscles and sinews of iron;
Brown as a nut was his face, but his russet beard was already,
Flaked with patches of snow, as hedges sometimes in November.
Near him was seated John Alden,[9] his friend and household companion,
Writing with diligent speed at a table of pine by the window;
Fair-haired, azure-eyed, with delicate Saxon complexion,
Having the dew of his youth, and the beauty thereof, as the captives
Whom Saint Gregory saw, and exclaimed, "Not Angles but Angels."[10]
Youngest of all was he of the men who came in the Mayflower.

Suddenly breaking the silence, the diligent scribe interrupting,
Spake, in the pride of his heart, Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth.
"Look at these arms," he said, "the warlike weapons that hang here
Burnished and bright and clean, as if for parade or inspection!

[8] **fowling-piece.** A light gun used for shooting birds. **matchlock.** An old-fashioned gun, fired by means of a match. This "match" was generally made of twisted cord which would hold the flame.

[9] **John Alden** had been taken aboard the vessel at Southampton, as a cooper. He was free to return to England on the Mayflower, but decided to share the fortunes of the Puritans.

[10] A monk named Gregory, in the sixth century, seeing some fair-haired youths in the slave market at Rome, enquired as to their nationality. He was told that they were Angles. "Non Angli, sed Angeli," said Gregory. "They have the faces of Angels, not of Angles."

This is the sword of Damascus, I fought with in Flanders;[11] this breastplate,
Well I remember the day! once saved my life in a skirmish;
Here in front you can see the very dint of the bullet
Fired point-blank at my heart by a Spanish arcabucero.[12]
Had it not been of sheer steel, the forgotten bones of Miles Standish
Would at this moment be mould, in their grave in the Flemish morasses."
Thereupon answered John Alden, but looked not up from his writing:
"Truly the breath of the Lord hath slackened the speed of the bullet;
He in his mercy preserved you, to be our shield and our weapon!"
Still the Captain continued, unheeding the words of the stripling:
"See, how bright they are burnished, as if in an arsenal hanging;
That is because I have done it myself, and not left it to others.
Serve yourself, would you be well served, is an excellent adage;
So I take care of my arms, as you of your pens and your inkhorn.
Then, too, there are my soldiers, my great, invincible army,
Twelve men, all equipped, having each his rest and his matchlock,
Eighteen shillings a month, together with diet and pillage,
And, like Cæsar, I know the name of each of my soldiers!"
This he said with a smile, that danced in his eyes, as the sunbeams
Dance on the waves of the sea, and vanish again in a moment.
Alden laughed as he wrote, and still the Captain continued:

[11] **Flanders.** Part of the Netherlands, in Europe.

[12] **arcabucero.** Literally, archer; here, musketeer.

"Look! you can see from this window my brazen howitzer[13] planted
High on the roof of the church,[14] a preacher who speaks to the purpose,
Steady, straightforward, and strong, with irresistible logic,
Orthodox, flashing conviction right into the hearts of the heathen.
Now we are ready, I think, for any assault of the Indians:
Let them come, if they like, and the sooner they try it the better,—
Let them come if they like, be it sagamore, sachem, or pow-wow,[15]
Aspinet, Samoset, Corbitant, Squanto, or Tokamahamon!"
Long at the window he stood, and wistfully gazed on the landscape,
Washed with a cold gray mist, the vapory breath of the east wind.
Forest and meadow and hill, and the steel-blue rim of the ocean,
Lying silent and sad, in the afternoon shadows and sunshine.
Over his countenance flitted a shadow like those on the landscape,
Gloom intermingled with light; and his voice was subdued with emotion,

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[13] **howitzer.** A small cannon.

[14] The following is from an account of Plymouth Colony in 1627: "Upon the hill they have a large square house with a flat roof stayed with oak beams, upon the top of which they have six cannons, commanding the surrounding country. The lower part they use for their Church, where they preach on Sundays and the usual holidays. They assemble by beat of drum, each with his musket or firelock, in front of the Captain's door; they have their cloaks on and place themselves in order three abreast, and are led by a sergeant without beat of drum. Behind comes the Governor in a long robe; beside him on the right hand comes the preacher, and on the left hand the Captain, and so they march in good order, and each sets his arms down near him. Thus they are constantly on their guard night and day."

[15] **sagamore.** An Indian chief of the second rank; **sachem,** a chief of the first rank; **pow-wow,** a conjurer or medicine-man.

Tenderness, pity, regret, as after a pause he proceeded:
"Yonder there, on the hill by the sea lies buried Rose Standish;
Beautiful rose of love, that bloomed for me by the wayside!
She was the first to die of all who came in the Mayflower!
Green above her is growing the field of wheat we have sown there,
Better to hide from the Indian scouts the graves of our people,
Lest they should count them and see how many already have perished!"
Sadly his face he averted, and strode up and down and was thoughtful.

Fixed to the opposite wall was a shelf of books, and among them
Prominent three, distinguished alike for bulk and for binding;
Barriffe's Artillery Guide, and the Commentaries of Cæsar,
Out of the Latin translated by Arthur Goldinge of London,[16]
And, as if guarded by these, between them was standing the Bible.
Musing a moment before them, Miles Standish paused, as if doubtful
Which of the three he should choose for his consolation and comfort,
Whether the wars of the Hebrews, the famous campaigns of the Romans,
Or the Artillery practice, designed for belligerent Christians.
Finally down from its shelf he dragged the ponderous Roman,
Seated himself at the window, and opened the book, and in silence
Turned o'er the well-worn leaves, where thumb-marks thick on the margin,
Like the trample of feet proclaimed the battle was hottest.

[16] **Goldinge.** A well-known translator of the Elizabethan age.

Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying pen of the stripling,
Busily writing epistles important, to go by the Mayflower,[17]
Ready to sail on the morrow, or next day at latest, God willing!
Homeward bound with the tidings of all that terrible winter.
Letters written by Alden, and full of the name of Priscilla,[18]
Full of the name and the fame of the Puritan maiden Priscilla!

II

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying pen of the stripling,
Or an occasional sigh from the laboring heart of the Captain,
Reading the marvellous words and achievements of Julius Cæsar.
After a while he exclaimed, as he smote with his hand, palm downwards,
Heavily on the page: "A wonderful man was this Cæsar!
You are a writer, and I am a fighter, but here is a fellow
Who could both write and fight, and in both was equally skilful!"
Straightway answered and spake John Alden, the comely, the youthful:
"Yes, he was equally skilled, as you say, with his pen and his weapons.
Somewhere have I read, but where I forget, he could dictate
Seven letters at once, at the same time writing his memoirs."
"Truly," continued the Captain, not heeding or hearing the other,

[17] The Mayflower set sail for England on April 5, 1621.

[18] **Priscilla Mullins** (or Molines) was the daughter of William Mullins, who died in the February following the landing of the Pilgrims.

"Truly a wonderful man was Caius Julius Cæsar!
Better be first, he said, in a little Iberian village,
Than be second in Rome,[19] and I think he was right when he said it.
Twice was he married before he was twenty, and many times after;
Battles five hundred he fought, and a thousand cities he conquered;
He, too, fought in Flanders, as he himself has recorded;
Finally he was stabbed by his friend, the orator Brutus!
Now, do you know what he did on a certain occasion in Flanders,
When the rear-guard of his army retreated, the front giving way too,
And the immortal Twelfth Legion was crowded so closely together
There was no room for their swords? Why, he seized a shield from a soldier,
Put himself straight at the head of his troops, and commanded the captains,
Calling on each by his name, to order forward the ensigns;
Then to widen the ranks, and give more room for their weapons;
So he won the day, the battle of something-or-other.
That's what I always say; if you wish a thing to be well done,
You must do it yourself, you must not leave it to others!"

[19] "In his journey, as he was crossing the Alps and passing by a small village of the barbarians with but few inhabitants, and those wretchedly poor, his companions asked the question among themselves by way of mockery if there were any canvassing for offices there; any contention which should be uppermost, or feuds of great men one against another. To which Cæsar made answer seriously, 'For my part I had rather be the first man among these fellows, than the second man in Rome.'" Plutarch's *Life of Cæsar*, A. H. Clough's translation

All was silent again; the Captain continued his reading.
Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying pen of the stripling
Writing epistles important to go next day by the Mayflower,
Filled with the name and the fame of the Puritan maiden Priscilla;
Every sentence began or closed with the name of Priscilla,
Till the treacherous pen, to which he confided the secret,
Strove to betray it by singing and shouting the name of Priscilla!
Finally closing his book, with a bang of the ponderous cover,
Sudden and loud as the sound of a soldier grounding his musket,
Thus to the young man spake Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth:
"When you have finished your work, I have something important to tell you.
Be not however in haste; I can wait; I shall not be impatient!"
Straightway Alden replied, as he folded the last of his letters,
Pushing his papers aside, and giving respectful attention:
"Speak: for whenever you speak, I am always ready to listen,
Always ready to hear whatever pertains to Miles Standish."
Thereupon answered the Captain, embarrassed, and culling his phrases:
"'T is not good for a man to be alone, say the Scriptures.[20]
This I have said before, and again and again I repeat it;
Every hour in the day, I think it, and feel it, and say it.
Since Rose Standish died, my life has been weary and dreary;
Sick at heart have I been, beyond the healing of friendship.
Oft in my lonely hours have I thought of the maiden Priscilla.
She is alone in the world; her father and mother and brother

[20] Genesis, ii, 18.

Died in the winter together; I saw her going and coming,
Now to the grave of the dead, and now to the bed of the dying.
Patient, courageous, and strong, and said to myself, that if ever
There were angels on earth, as there are angels in heaven,
Two have I seen and known; and the angel whose name is Priscilla
Holds in my desolate life the place which the other abandoned.
Long have I cherished the thought, but never have dared to reveal it,
Being a coward in this, though valiant enough for the most part.
Go to the damsel Priscilla, the loveliest maiden of Plymouth,
Say that a blunt old Captain, a man not of words but of actions,
Offers his hand and his heart, the hand and heart of a soldier.
Not in these words, you know, but this in short is my meaning;
I am a maker of war, and not a maker of phrases,
You, who are bred as a scholar, can say it in elegant language,
Such as you read in your books of the pleadings and wooings of lovers,
Such as you think best adapted to win the heart of a maiden."

When he had spoken, John Alden, the fair-haired, taciturn stripling,
All aghast at his words, surprised, embarrassed, bewildered,
Trying to mask his dismay by treating the subject with lightness,
Trying to smile, and yet feeling his heart stand still in his bosom.

Just as a timepiece stops in a house that is stricken by lightning.
Thus made answer and spake, or rather stammered than answered:
"Such a message as that, I am sure I should mangle and mar it;
If you would have it well done,—I am only repeating your maxim,—
You must do it yourself, you must not leave it to others!"
But with the air of a man whom nothing can turn from his purpose
Gravely shaking his head, made answer the Captain of Plymouth:
"Truly the maxim is good, and I do not mean to gainsay it;
But we must use it discreetly, and not waste powder for nothing.
Now, as I said before, I was never a maker of phrases.
I can march up to a fortress and summon the place to surrender,
But march up to a woman with such a proposal, I dare not.
I'm not afraid of bullets, nor shot from the mouth of a cannon,
But of a thundering 'No!' point-blank from the mouth of a woman,
That I confess I'm afraid of, nor am I ashamed to confess it!
So you must grant my request, for you are an elegant scholar,
Having the graces of speech, and skill in the turning of phrases."
Taking the hand of his friend, who still was reluctant and doubtful,
Holding it long in his own, and pressing it kindly, he added:
"Though I have spoken thus lightly, yet deep is the feeling that prompts me;
Surely you cannot refuse what I ask in the name of our friendship!"

Then made answer John Alden: "The name of friendship is sacred;
What you demand in that name, I have not the power to deny you!"
So the strong will prevailed, subduing and moulding the gentler,
Friendship prevailed over love, and Alden went on his errand.

III

THE LOVER'S ERRAND.

So the strong will prevailed, and Alden went on his errand,
Out of the street of the village, and into the paths of the forest,
Into the tranquil woods, where bluebirds and robins were building
Towns in the populous trees, with hanging gardens of verdure,
Peaceful, aerial cities of joy and affection and freedom.
All around him was calm, but within him commotion and conflict,
Love contending with friendship, and self with each generous impulse.
To and fro in his breast his thoughts were heaving and dashing,
As in a foundering ship, with every roll of the vessel,
Washes the bitter sea, the merciless surge of the ocean!
"Must I relinquish it all," he cried with a wild lamentation,—
"Must I relinquish it all, the joy, the hope, the illusion?[21]
Was it for this I have loved, and waited, and worshipped in silence?
Was it for this I have followed the flying feet and the shadow
Over the wintry sea, to the desolate shores of New England?

[21] **illusion.** An illusion is a misleading or deceptive appearance. The happiness that he had looked forward to was turning out to be false and unreal.

Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption
Rise, like an exhalation, the misty phantoms of passion;
Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.
All is clear to me now; I feel it, I see it distinctly!
This is the hand of the Lord; it is laid upon me in anger,
For I have followed too much the heart's desires and devices,
Worshipping Astaroth blindly, and impious idols of Baal.[22]
This is the cross I must bear; the sin and the swift retribution."

So through the Plymouth woods John Alden went on his errand;
Crossing the brook at the ford, where it brawled over pebble and shallow,
Gathering still, as he went, the Mayflowers[23] blooming around him,
Fragrant, filling the air with a strange and wonderful sweetness,
Children lost in the woods, and covered with leaves in their slumber.
"Puritan flowers," he said, "and the type of Puritan maidens,
Modest and simple and sweet, the very type of Priscilla!
So I will take them to her; to Priscilla the Mayflower of Plymouth,
Modest and simple and sweet, as a parting gift will I take them;
Breathing their silent farewells, as they fade and wither and perish,
Soon to be thrown away as is the heart of the giver."

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[22] **Baal** and **Astaroth** were the two chief divinities of the Phœnicians, male and female respectively. To worship Baal and Astaroth is to give oneself up to worldly desires and pleasures.

[23] The **Mayflower**, in England, is the hawthorn; in the New England States, the trailing arbutus.

So through the Plymouth woods John Alden went on his errand ;
Came to an open space, and saw the disk of the ocean,
Sailless, sombre and cold with the comfortless breath of the east-wind ;
Saw the new-built house, and people at work in a meadow ;
Heard, as he drew near the door, the musical voice of Priscilla
Singing the hundredth Psalm, the grand old Puritan anthem,
Music that Luther sang to the sacred words of the Psalmist,
Full of the breath of the Lord, consoling and comforting many.
Then, as he opened the door, he beheld the form of the maiden,
Seated beside her wheel, and the carded wool like a snow-drift
Piled at her knee, her white hands feeding the ravenous spindle,
While with her foot on the treadle she guided the wheel in its motion.
Open wide on her lap lay the well-worn psalm-book of Ainsworth,[24]
Printed in Amsterdam, the words and the music together,
Rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in the wall of a churchyard,
Darkened and overhung by the running vine of the verses.
Such was the book from whose pages she sang the old Puritan anthem,
She, the Puritan girl, in the solitude of the forest,
Making the humble house and the modest apparel of homespun
Beautiful with her beauty, and rich with the wealth of her being !
Over him rushed, like a wind that is keen and cold and relentless,
Thoughts of what might have been, and the weight and woe of his errand ;

[24] **Ainsworth.** A clergyman and scholar who was persecuted on account of his religious belief, and sought refuge in Holland.

All the dreams that had faded, and all the hopes that had vanished,
All his life henceforth a dreary and tenantless mansion,
Haunted by vain regrets, and pallid, sorrowful faces.
Still he said to himself, and almost fiercely he said it,
"Let not him that putteth his hand to the plough look backwards;[25]
Though the ploughshare cut through the flowers of life to its fountains,
Though it pass o'er the graves of the dead and the hearths of the living,
It is the will of the Lord; and his mercy endureth forever!"

So he entered the house; and the hum of the wheel and the singing
Suddenly ceased; for Priscilla, aroused by his step on the threshold,
Rose as he entered and gave him her hand, in signal of welcome,
Saying, "I knew it was you, when I heard your step in the passage;
For I was thinking of you, as I sat there singing and spinning."
Awkward and dumb with delight, that a thought of him had been mingled
Thus in the sacred psalm, that came from the heart of the maiden,
Silent before her he stood, and gave her the flowers for an answer,
Finding no words for his thought. He remembered that day in the winter,
After the first great snow, when he broke a path from the village,

[25] Luke, ix, 62.

Reeling and plunging along through the drifts that encumbered the doorway,
Stamping the snow from his feet as he entered the house, and Priscilla
Laughed at his snowy locks, and gave him a seat by the fireside,
Grateful and pleased to know he had thought of her in the snow-storm.
Had he but spoken then! perhaps not in vain had he spoken;
Now it was all too late; the golden moment had vanished!
So he stood there abashed, and gave her the flowers for an answer.

Then they sat down and talked of the birds and the beautiful Spring-time;
Talked of their friends at home, and the Mayflower that sailed on the morrow.
"I have been thinking all day," said gently the Puritan maiden,
"Dreaming all night, and thinking all day, of the hedge-rows of England,—
They are in blossom now, and the country is all like a garden;
Thinking of lanes and fields, and the song of the lark and the linnet,
Seeing the village street, and familiar faces of neighbors
Going about as of old, and stopping to gossip together,
And, at the end of the street, the village church, with the ivy
Climbing the old gray tower, and the quiet graves in the churchyard.
Kind are the people I live with, and dear to me my religion;
Still my heart is so sad, that I wish myself back in Old England.
You will say it is wrong, but I cannot help it: I almost
Wish myself back in Old England, I feel so lonely and wretched."

Thereupon answered the youth: "Indeed I do not condemn you;
Stouter hearts than a woman's have quailed in this terrible winter.
Yours is tender and trusting, and needs a stronger to lean on;
So I have come to you now, with an offer and proffer of marriage
Made by a good man and true, Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth!"

Thus he delivered his message, the dexterous writer of letters,—
Did not embellish the theme, nor array it in beautiful phrases,
But came straight to the point, and blurted it out like a school-boy;
Even the Captain himself could hardly have said it more bluntly.
Mute with amazement and sorrow, Priscilla the Puritan maiden.
Looked into Alden's face, her eyes dilated with wonder,
Feeling his words like a blow, that stunned her and rendered her speechless;
Till at length she exclaimed, interrupting the ominous silence:
"If the great Captain of Plymouth is so very eager to wed me,
Why does he not come himself, and take the trouble to woo me?
If I am not worth the wooing, I surely am not worth the winning!"
Then John Alden began explaining and smoothing the matter,
Making it worse as he went, by saying the Captain was busy,—
Had no time for such things;—such things! the words grated harshly
Fell on the ear of Priscilla; and swift as a flash she made answer:

"Has he no time for such things, as you call it, before he is married,
Would he be likely to find it, or make it, after the wedding?
That is the way with you men; you don't understand us, you cannot.
When you have made up your minds, after thinking of this one and that one,
Choosing, selecting, rejecting, comparing one with another,
Then you make known your desire, with abrupt and sudden avowal,
And are offended and hurt, and indignant perhaps, that a woman
Does not respond at once to a love that she never suspected,
Does not attain at a bound the height to which you have been climbing.
This is not right nor just; for surely a woman's affection
Is not a thing to be asked for, and had for only the asking.
When one is truly in love, one not only says it, but shows it
Had he but waited awhile, had he only showed that he loved me,
Even this Captain of yours—who knows?—at last might have won me,
Old and rough as he is; but now it never can happen."

Still John Alden went on, unheeding the words of Priscilla,
Urging the suit of his friend, explaining, persuading, expanding;
Spoke of his courage and skill, and of all his battles in Flanders,
How with the people of God he had chosen to suffer affliction,
How, in return for his zeal, they had made him Captain of Plymouth;
He was a gentleman born, could trace his pedigree plainly

Back to Hugh Standish of Duxbury Hall, in Lancashire, England,
Who was the son of Ralph, and the grandson of Thurston de Standish;
Heir unto vast estates, of which he was basely defrauded,
Still bore the family arms, and had for his crest a cock argent
Combed and wattled gules,[26] and all the rest of the blazon.
He was a man of honor, of noble and generous nature;
Though he was rough, he was kindly; she knew how during the winter
He had attended the sick, with a hand as gentle as woman's;
Somewhat hasty and hot, he could not deny it, and headstrong,
Stern as a soldier might be, but hearty, and placable always,
Not to be laughed at and scorned, because he was little of stature;
For he was great of heart, magnanimous, courtly, courageous,
Any woman in Plymouth, nay, any woman in England,
Might be happy and proud to be called the wife of Miles Standish!

But as he warmed and glowed, in his simple and eloquent language,
Quite forgetful of self, and full of the praise of his rival,
Archly the maiden smiled, and, with eyes overrunning with laughter,
Said, in a tremulous voice, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

IV

JOHN ALDEN.

Into the open air John Alden, perplexed and bewildered,
Rushed like a man insane, and wandered alone by the sea-side;

[26] Terms used in heraldry.

Paced up and down the sands, and bared his head to the east-wind,
Cooling his heated brow, and the fire and fever within him.
Slowly, as out of the heavens, with apocalyptical splendors,
Sank the City of God, in the vision of John the Apostle,[27]
So, with its cloudy walls of chrysolite, jasper, and sapphire,
Sank the broad red sun, and over its turrets uplifted
Glimmered the golden reed of the angel who measured the city.
"Welcome, O wind of the East!" he exclaimed in his wild exultation,
"Welcome, O wind of the East, from the caves of the misty Atlantic!
Blowing o'er fields of dulse,[28] and measureless meadows of sea-grass,
Blowing o'er rocky wastes, and the grottos and gardens of ocean!
Lay thy cold, moist hand on my burning forehead, and wrap me
Close in thy garments of mist, to allay the fever within me!"

Like an awakened conscience, the sea was moaning and tossing,
Beating remorseful and loud the mutable sands of the sea-shore,
Fierce in his soul was the struggle and tumult of passions contending;
Love triumphant and crowned, and friendship wounded and bleeding,
Passionate cries of desire, and importunate pleadings of duty!
"Is it my fault," he said, "that the maiden has chosen between us?

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[27] See Revelation, xxi and xxii. An apocalypse is a revelation, and the term is generally applied to the Book of Revelation.

[28] **dulse.** Coarse red seaweed, sometimes used as food.

Is it my fault that he failed,—my fault that I am the victor?"
Then within him there thundered a voice, like the voice of the Prophet:
"It hath displeased the Lord!"—and he thought of David's transgression,[29]
Bathsheba's beautiful face, and his friend in the front of the battle!
Shame and confusion of guilt, and abasement and self-condemnation,
Overwhelmed him at once; and he cried in the deepest contrition:
"It hath displeased the Lord! It is the temptation of Satan!"

Then, uplifting his head, he looked at the sea, and beheld there
Dimly the shadowy form of the Mayflower riding at anchor,
Rocked on the rising tide, and ready to sail on the morrow;
Heard the voices of men through the mist, the rattle of cordage
Thrown on the deck, the shouts of the mate, and the sailors' "Ay, ay, Sir!"
Clear and distinct, but not loud, in the dripping air of the twilight.
Still for a moment he stood, and listened, and stared at the vessel,
Then went hurriedly on, as one who, seeing a phantom,
Stops, then quickens his pace, and follows the beckoning, shadow.
"Yes, it is plain to me now," he murmured: "the hand of the Lord is
Leading me out of the land of darkness, the bondage of error,

[29] II Samuel, xii, 3.

Through the sea, that shall lift the walls of its waters around me,
Hiding me, cutting me off, from the cruel thoughts that pursue me.
Back will I go o'er the ocean, this dreary land will abandon,
Her whom I may not love, and him whom my heart has offended.
Better to be in my grave in the green old churchyard in England,
Close by my mother's side, and among the dust of my kindred;
Better be dead and forgotten, than living in shame and dishonor!
Sacred and safe and unseen, in the dark of the narrow chamber
With me my secret shall lie, like a buried jewel that glimmers
Bright on the hand that is dust, in the chambers of silence and darkness,—
Yes, as the marriage ring of the great espousal hereafter!"

Thus as he spake, he turned, in the strength of his strong resolution,
Leaving behind him the shore, and hurried along in the twilight,
Through the congenial gloom of the forest silent and sombre,
Till he beheld the lights in the seven houses of Plymouth,
Shining like seven stars in the dusk and mist of the evening.
Soon he entered his door, and found the redoubtable Captain
Sitting alone, and absorbed in the martial pages of Cæsar,
Fighting some great campaign in Hainault or Brabant or Flanders.[30]
"Long have you been on your errand," he said with a cheery demeanor,

[30] Districts of the Netherlands.

Even as one who is waiting an answer, and fears not the issue.
"Not far off is the house, although the woods are between us;
But you have lingered so long, that while you were going and coming
I have fought ten battles and sacked and demolished a city.
Come, sit down, and in order relate to me all that has happened."

Then John Alden spake, and related the wondrous adventure
From beginning to end, minutely, just as it happened;
How he had seen Priscilla, and how he had sped in his courtship,
Only smoothing a little, and softening down her refusal.
But when he came at length to the words Priscilla had spoken,
Words so tender and cruel, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"
Up leaped the Captain of Plymouth, and stamped on the floor, till his armor
Clanged on the wall, where it hung, with a sound of sinister omen.
All his pent-up wrath burst forth in a sudden explosion,
E'en as a hand-grenade,[31] that scatters destruction around it.
Wildly he shouted, and loud: "John Alden! you have betrayed me!
Me, Miles Standish, your friend! have supplanted, defrauded, betrayed me!
One of my ancestors ran his sword through the heart of Wat Tyler;[32]
Who shall prevent me from running my own through the heart of a traitor?
Yours is the greater treason, for yours is a treason to friendship!

[31] **hand-grenade.** A ball or shell filled with explosives, and thrown by the hand.

[32] **Wat Tyler.** The leader of the peasant revolt in England in 1381.

You, who lived under my roof, whom I cherished and loved as a brother;
You, who have fed at my board, and drunk at my cup, to whose keeping
I have intrusted my honor, my thoughts the most sacred and secret,—
You, too, Brutus! ah, woe to the name of friendship hereafter!
Brutus was Cæsar's friend, and you were mine, but henceforward
Let there be nothing between us save war, and implacable hatred!"

So spake the Captain of Plymouth, and strode about in the chamber,
Chafing and choking with rage; like cords were the veins on his temples.
But in the midst of his anger a man appeared at the doorway,
Bringing in uttermost haste a message of urgent importance,
Rumors of danger and war and hostile incursions of Indians!
Straightway the Captain paused, and, without further question or parley,
Took from the nail on the wall his sword with its scabbard of iron,
Buckled the belt round his waist, and, frowning fiercely, departed.
Alden was left alone. He heard the clank of the scabbard
Growing fainter and fainter, and dying away in the distance.
Then he arose from his seat, and looked forth into the darkness,
Felt the cool air blow on his cheek, that was hot with the insult,
Lifted his eyes to the heavens, and, folding his hands as in childhood,
Prayed in the silence of night to the Father who seeth in secret.

Meanwhile the choleric Captain strode wrathful away to the council,
Found it already assembled, impatiently waiting his coming;
Men in the middle of life, austere and grave in deportment,
Only one of them old, the hill that was nearest to heaven,
Covered with snow, but erect, the excellent Elder of Plymouth.[33]
God had sifted three kingdoms to find the wheat for this planting,
Then had sifted the wheat, as the living seed of a nation;
So say the chronicles old, and such is the faith of the people!
Near them was standing an Indian, in attitude stern and defiant,
Naked down to the waist, and grim and ferocious in aspect;
While on the table before them was lying unopened a Bible,
Ponderous, bound in leather, brass-studded, printed in Holland,
And beside it outstretched the skin of a rattlesnake glittered,
Filled, like a quiver, with arrows: a signal and challenge of warfare,
Brought by the Indian, and speaking with arrowy tongues of defiance.
This Miles Standish beheld, as he entered, and heard them debating
What were an answer befitting the hostile message and menace,
Talking of this and of that, contriving, suggesting, objecting;
One voice only for peace, and that the voice of the Elder,
Judging it wise and well that some at least were converted,
Rather than any were slain, for this was but Christian behavior!

[33] Elder William Brewster.

Then out spake Miles Standish, the stalwart Captain of Plymouth,
Muttering deep in his throat, for his voice was husky with anger,
"What! do you mean to make war with milk and the water of roses?
Is it to shoot red squirrels you have your howitzer planted
There on the roof of the church, or is it to shoot red devils?
Truly the only tongue that is understood by a savage
Must be the tongue of fire that speaks from the mouth of the cannon!"
Thereupon answered and said the excellent Elder of Plymouth,
Somewhat amazed and alarmed at this irreverent language:
"Not so thought Saint Paul, nor yet the other Apostles;
Not from the cannon's mouth were the tongues of fire they spake with!"[34]
But unheeded fell this mild rebuke on the Captain,
Who had advanced to the table, and thus continued discoursing:
"Leave this matter to me, for to me by right it pertaineth.
War is a terrible trade; but in the cause that is righteous,
Sweet is the smell of powder; and thus I answer the challenge!"

Then from the rattlesnake's skin, with a sudden, contemptuous gesture,
Jerking the Indian arrows, he filled it with powder and bullets
Full to the very jaws, and handed it back to the savage,
Saying, in thundering tones: "Here, take it! this is your answer!"
Silently out of the room then glided the glistening savage,
Bearing the serpent's skin, and seeming himself like a serpent,
Winding his sinuous way in the dark to the depths of the forest.

[34] See Acts ii, 1-4.

V

THE SAILING OF THE MAYFLOWER.

Just in the gray of the dawn, as the mists uprose from the meadows,
There was a stir and a sound in the slumbering village of Plymouth;
Clanging and clicking of arms, and the order imperative, "Forward!"
Given in tone suppressed, a tramp of feet, and then silence.
Figures ten, in the mist, marched slowly out of the village.
Standish the stalwart it was, with eight of his valorous army,
Led by their Indian guide, by Hobomok, friend of the white men,
Northward marching to quell the sudden revolt of the savage.
Giants they seemed in the mist, or the mighty men of King David;
Giants in heart they were, who believed in God and the Bible,—
Ay, who believed in the smiting of Midianites and Philistines,
Over them gleamed far off the crimson banners of morning;
Under them loud on the sands, the serried billows, advancing,
Fired along the line, and in regular order retreated.

Many a mile had they marched, when at length the village of Plymouth
Woke from its sleep, and arose, intent on its manifold labors.
Sweet was the air and soft; and slowly the smoke from the chimneys
Rose over roofs of thatch, and pointed steadily eastward;
Men came forth from the doors, and paused and talked of the weather,
Said that the wind had changed, and was blowing fair for the Mayflower;

Talked of their Captain's departure, and all the dangers that menaced,
He being gone, the town, and what should be done in his absence.
Merrily sang the birds, and the tender voices of women
Consecrated with hymns the common cares of the household.
Out of the sea rose the sun, and the billows rejoiced at his coming;
Beautiful were his feet on the purple tops of the mountains;
Beautiful on the sails of the Mayflower riding at anchor,
Battered and blackened and worn by all the storms of the winter.
Loosely against her masts was hanging and flapping her canvas,
Rent by so many gales, and patched by the hands of the sailors.
Suddenly from her side, as the sun rose over the ocean,
Darted a puff of smoke, and floated seaward; anon rang
Loud over field and forest the cannon's roar, and the echoes
Heard and repeated the sound, the signal-gun of departure!
Ah! but with louder echoes replied the hearts of the people!
Meekly, in voices subdued, the chapter was read from the Bible,
Meekly the prayer was begun, but ended in fervent entreaty!
Then from their houses in haste came forth the Pilgrims of Plymouth,
Men and women and children, all hurrying down to the seashore,
Eager, with tearful eyes, to say farewell to the Mayflower,
Homeward bound o'er the sea, and leaving them here in the desert.

Foremost among them was Alden. All night he had lain without slumber,
Turning and tossing about in the heat and unrest of his fever.
He had beheld Miles Standish, who came back late from the council,
Stalking into the room, and heard him mutter and murmur,
Sometimes it seemed a prayer, and sometimes it sounded like swearing.
Once he had come to the bed, and stood there a moment in silence;
Then he had turned away, and said: "I will not awake him;
Let him sleep on, it is best; for what is the use of more talking!"
Then he extinguished the light, and threw himself down on his pallet,
Dressed as he was, and ready to start at the break of the morning,—
Covered himself with the cloak he had worn in his campaigns in Flanders,—
Slept as a soldier sleeps in his bivouac, ready for action.
But with the dawn he arose; in the twilight Alden beheld him
Put on his corselet of steel, and all the rest of his armor,
Buckle about his waist his trusty blade of Damascus,
Take from the corner his musket, and so stride out of the chamber.
Often the heart of the youth had burned and yearned to embrace him,
Often his lips had essayed to speak, imploring for pardon;
All the old friendship came back with its tender and grateful emotions;
But his pride overmastered the nobler nature within him,—
Pride, and the sense of his wrong, and the burning fire of the insult.

So he beheld his friend departing in anger, but spake not,
Saw him go forth to danger, perhaps to death, and he spake not!
Then he arose from his bed, and heard what the people were saying,
Joined in the talk at the door, with Stephen and Richard and Gilbert,[35]
Joined in the morning prayer, and in the reading of Scripture,
And, with the others, in haste went hurrying down to the sea-shore,
Down to the Plymouth Rock, that had been to their feet as a doorstep
Into a world unknown,—the corner-stone of a nation!

There with his boat was the Master, already a little impatient
Lest he should lose the tide, or the wind might shift to the eastward,
Square-built, hearty, and strong, with an odor of ocean about him,
Speaking with this one and that, and cramming letters and parcels
Into his pockets capacious, and messages mingled together
Into his narrow brain, till at last he was wholly bewildered.
Nearer the boat stood Alden, with one foot placed on the gunwale,[36]
One still firm on the rock, and talking at times with the sailors,
Seated erect on the thwarts,[37] all ready and eager for starting,
He too was eager to go, and thus put an end to his anguish,

[35] Stephen Hopkins, Richard Warren, Gilbert Winslow.

[36] **gunwale.** The upper edge of a boat's side.

[37] **thwarts.** Seats, crossing from one side of the boat to the other.

Thinking to fly from despair, that swifter than keel is or canvas,
Thinking to drown in the sea the ghost that would rise and pursue him.
But as he gazed on the crowd, he beheld the form of Priscilla
Standing dejected among them, unconscious of all that was passing.
Fixed were her eyes upon his, as if she divined his intention,
Fixed with a look so sad, so reproachful, imploring, and patient,
That with a sudden revulsion his heart recoiled from its purpose,
As from the verge of a crag, where one step more is destruction.
Strange is the heart of man, with its quick, mysterious instincts!
Strange is the life of man, and fatal or fated are moments,
Whereupon turn, as on hinges, the gates of the wall adamantine![38]
"Here I remain!" he exclaimed, as he looked at the heavens above him,
Thanking the Lord whose breath had scattered the mist and the madness,
Wherein, blind and lost, to death he was staggering headlong.
"Yonder snow-white cloud, that floats in the ether above me,
Seems like a hand that is pointing and beckoning over the ocean.
There is another hand, that is not so spectral and ghost-like,
Holding me, drawing me back, and clasping mine for protection.
Float, O hand of cloud, and vanish away in the ether!

[38] **adamantine.** That cannot be broken; hence *fate* is "the wall adamantine."

Roll thyself up like a fist, to threaten and daunt me; I heed not
Either your warning or menace, or any omen of evil!
There is no land so sacred, no air so pure and so wholesome,
As is the air she breathes, and the soil that is pressed by her footsteps.
Here for her sake will I stay, and like an invisible presence
Hover around her forever, protecting, supporting her weakness;
Yes! as my foot was the first that stepped on this rock at the landing,
So, with the blessing of God, shall it be the last at the leaving!"

Meanwhile the Master alert, but with dignified air and important,
Scanning with watchful eye the tide and the wind and the weather,
Walked about on the sands, and the people crowded around him
Saying a few last words, and enforcing his careful remembrance.
Then, taking each by the hand, as if he were grasping a tiller,
Into the boat he sprang, and in haste shoved off to his vessel,
Glad in his heart to get rid of all this worry and flurry,
Glad to be gone from a land of sand and sickness and sorrow,
Short allowance of victual, and plenty of nothing but Gospel!
Lost in the sound of the oars was the last farewell of the Pilgrims.
O strong hearts and true! not one went back in the Mayflower!
No, not one looked back, who had set his hand to this ploughing!

Soon we heard on board the shouts and songs of the sailors
Heaving the windlass round, and hoisting the ponderous anchor.
Then the yards[39] were braced, and all sails set to the west-wind,
Blowing steady and strong; and the Mayflower sailed from the harbor,
Rounded the point of the Gurnet,[40] and leaving far to the southward
Island and cape of sand, and the Field of the First Encounter,[41]
Took the wind on her quarter, and stood for the open Atlantic,
Borne on the sand of the sea, and the swelling hearts of the Pilgrims.

Long in silence they watched the receding sail of the vessel,
Much endeared to them all, as something living and human;
Then, as if filled with the spirit, and wrapped in a vision prophetic,
Baring his hoary head, the excellent Elder of Plymouth
Said, "Let us pray!" and they prayed, and thanked the Lord and took courage.
Mournfully sobbed the waves at the base of the rock, and above them
Bowed and whispered the wheat on the hill of death, and their kindred
Seemed to awake in their graves, and to join in the prayer that they uttered.
Sun-illumined and white, on the eastern verge of the ocean
Gleamed the departing sail, like a marble slab in a graveyard;

[39] **yards.** The spars supporting the sails.

[40] **Gurnet.** A headland near Plymouth.

[41] The place where the Pilgrims had their first encounter with the Indians, December 8, 1620.

Buried beneath it lay forever all hope of escaping,
Lo! as they turned to depart, they saw the form of an Indian,
Watching them from the hill; but while they spake with each other,
Pointing with outstretched hands, and saying, "Look!" he had vanished.
So they returned to their homes; but Alden lingered a little,
Musing alone on the shore, and watching the wash of the billows
Round the base of the rock, and the sparkle and flash of the sunshine,
Like the spirit of God, moving visibly over the waters.[42]

VI

PRISCILLA.

Thus for a while he stood, and mused by the shore of the ocean,
Thinking of many things, and most of all of Priscilla;
And as if thought had the power to draw to itself, like the loadstone,
Whatsoever it touches, by subtile laws of its nature,
Lo! as he turned to depart, Priscilla was standing beside him.

"Are you so much offended, you will not speak to me?" said she.
"Am I so much to blame, that yesterday, when you were pleading
Warmly the cause of another, my heart, impulsive and wayward,
Pleaded your own, and spake out, forgetful perhaps of decorum?

[42] See Genesis, i, 2.

Certainly you can forgive me for speaking so frankly, for saying
What I ought not to have said, yet now I can never unsay it;
For there are moments in life, when the heart is so full of emotion,
That if by chance it be shaken, or into its depths like a pebble
Drops some careless word, it overflows, and its secret,
Spilt on the ground like water, can never be gathered together.
Yesterday I was shocked, when I heard you speak of Miles Standish,
Praising his virtues, transforming his very defects into virtues,
Praising his courage and strength, and even his fighting in Flanders,
As if by fighting alone you could win the heart of a woman,
Quite overlooking yourself and the rest, in exalting your hero.
Therefore I spake as I did, by an irresistible impulse.
You will forgive me, I hope, for the sake of the friendship between us,
Which is too true and too sacred to be so easily broken!"
Thereupon answered John Alden, the scholar, the friend of Miles Standish:
"I was not angry with you, with myself alone I was angry,
Seeing how badly I managed the matter I had in my keeping."
"No!" interrupted the maiden, with answer prompt and decisive;
"No; you were angry with me, for speaking so frankly and freely.
It was wrong, I acknowledge; for it is the fate of a woman
Long to be patient and silent, to wait like a ghost that is speechless,

Till some questioning voice dissolves the spell of its silence.
Hence is the inner life of so many suffering women
Sunless and silent and deep, like subterranean rivers
Running through caverns of darkness, unheard, unseen, and unfruitful,
Chafing their channels of stone, with endless and profitless murmurs."
Thereupon answered John Alden, the young man, the lover of women:
"Heaven forbid it, Priscilla; and truly they seem to me always
More like the beautiful rivers that watered the garden of Eden,[43]
More like the river Euphrates, through deserts of Havilah flowing,
Filling the land with delight, and memories sweet of the garden!"
"Ah, by these words, I can see," again interrupted the maiden,
"How very little you prize me, or care for what I am saying.
When from the depths of my heart, in pain and with secret misgiving,
Frankly I speak to you, asking for sympathy only and kindness,
Straightway you take up my words, that are plain and direct and in earnest,
Turn them away from their meaning, and answer with flattering phrases.
This is not right, is not just, is not true to the best that is in you;
For I know and esteem you, and feel that your nature is noble,
Lifting mine up to a higher, a more ethereal level.

[43] See Genesis, ii, 10-14.

Therefore I value your friendship, and feel it perhaps the more keenly
If you say aught that implies I am only as one among many,
If you make use of those common and complimentary phrases
Most men think so fine, in dealing and speaking with women,
But which women reject as insipid, if not as insulting." 680

Mute and amazed was Alden; and listened and looked at Priscilla,
Thinking he never had seen her more fair, more divine in her beauty.
He who but yesterday pleaded so glibly the cause of another,
Stood there embarrassed and silent, and seeking in vain for an answer.
So the maiden went on, and little divined or imagined 685
What was at work in his heart, that made him so awkward and speechless.
"Let us, then, be what we are, and speak what we think, and in all things
Keep ourselves loyal to truth, and the sacred professions of friendship.
It is no secret I tell you, nor am I ashamed to declare it:
I have liked to be with you, to see you, to speak with you always. 690
So I was hurt at your words, and a little affronted to hear you
Urge me to marry your friend, though he were the Captain Miles Standish.
For I must tell you the truth: much more to me is your friendship
Than all the love he could give, were he twice the hero you think him."
Then she extended her hand, and Alden, who eagerly grasped it, 695
Felt all the wounds in his heart, that were aching and bleeding so sorely,

Healed by the touch of that hand, and he said, with a voice full of feeling:
"Yes, we must ever be friends; and of all who offer you friendship
Let me be ever the first, the truest, the nearest and dearest!"

Casting a farewell look at the glimmering sail of the Mayflower
Distant, but still in sight, and sinking below the horizon,
Homeward together they walked, with a strange, indefinite feeling,
That all the rest had departed and left them alone in the desert.
But, as they went through the fields in the blessing and smile of the sunshine,
Lighter grew their hearts, and Priscilla said very archly:
"Now that our terrible Captain has gone in pursuit of the Indians,
Where he is happier far than he would be commanding a household,
You may speak boldly, and tell me of all that happened between you,
When you returned last night, and said how ungrateful you found me."
Thereupon answered John Alden, and told her the whole of the story,—
Told her his own despair, and the direful wrath of Miles Standish.
Whereat the maiden smiled, and said between laughing and earnest,
"He is a little chimney, and heated hot in a moment!"
But as he gently rebuked her, and told her how he had suffered,—
How he had even determined to sail that day in the Mayflower,

And had remained for her sake, on hearing the dangers that threatened,—
All her manner was changed, and she said with a faltering accent,
"Truly I thank you for this: how good you have been to me always!"

Thus, as a pilgrim devout, who toward Jerusalem journeys,
Taking three steps in advance, and one reluctantly backward,
Urged by importunate zeal, and withheld by pangs of contrition;
Slowly but steadily onward, receding yet ever advancing,
Journeyed this Puritan youth to the Holy Land of his longings,
Urged by the fervor of love, and withheld by remorseful misgivings.

VII

THE MARCH OF MILES STANDISH.[44]

Meanwhile the stalwart Miles Standish was marching steadily northward,
Winding through forest and swamp, and along the trend of the sea-shore,
All day long, with hardly a halt, the fire of his anger
Burning and crackling within, and the sulphurous odor of powder
Seeming more sweet to his nostrils than all the scents of the forest.
Silent and moody he went, and much he revolved his discomfort;
He who was used to success, and to easy victories always,
Thus to be flouted, rejected, and laughed to scorn by a maiden.

[44] The account of the march of Miles Standish is based on the New England chronicles.

Thus to be mocked and betrayed by the friend whom most he had trusted!
Ah! 't was too much to be borne, and he fretted and chafed in his armor!

"I alone am to blame," he muttered, "for mine was the folly.
What has a rough old soldier, grown grim and gray in the harness,
Used to the camp and its ways, to do with the wooing of maidens?
'T was but a dream,—let it pass,—let it vanish like so many others!
What I thought was a flower, is only a weed, and is worthless;
Out of my heart will I pluck it, and throw it away, and henceforward
Be but a fighter of battles, a lover and wooer of dangers."
Thus he revolved in his mind his sorry defeat and discomfort,
While he was marching by day or lying at night in the forest,
Looking up at the trees and the constellations beyond them.

After a three days' march he came to an Indian encampment
Pitched on the edge of a meadow, between the sea and the forest;
Women at work by the tents, and warriors, horrid with war-paint,
Seated about a fire, and smoking and talking together;
Who, when they saw from afar the sudden approach of the white men,
Saw the flash of the sun on breastplate and sabre and musket,
Straightway leaped to their feet, and two, from among them advancing,
Came to parley with Standish, and offer him furs as a present;

Friendship was in their looks, but in their hearts there was hatred.
Braves of the tribe were these, and brothers, gigantic in stature,
Huge as Goliath of Gath, or the terrible Og, king of Bashan ;[45]
One was Pecksuot named, and the other was called Wattawamat.
Round their necks were suspended their knives in scabbards of wampum,[46]
Two-edged, trenchant knives, with points as sharp as a needle.
Other arms had they none, for they were cunning and crafty.
"Welcome, English!" they said,—these words they had learned from the traders
Touching at times on the coast, to barter, and chaffer for peltries.[47]
Then in their native tongue they began to parley with Standish,
Through his guide and interpreter, Hobomok, friend of the white man,
Begging for blankets and knives, but mostly for muskets and powder,
Kept by the white man, they said, concealed, with the plague, in his cellars,
Ready to be let loose, and destroy his brother the red man!
But when Standish refused, and said he would give them the Bible,
Suddenly changing their tone, they began to boast and to bluster.
Then Wattawamat advanced with a stride in front of the other,

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[45] See I Samuel, xvii, and Numbers, xxi.

[46] **wampum.** Beads made of shells, and used by the Indians both for money and for ornament.

[47] **to chaffer for peltries.** To trade in skins or furs.

And, with a lofty demeanor, thus vauntingly spake to the Captain:
"Now Wattawamat can see, by the fiery eyes of the Captain,
Angry is he in his heart; but the heart of the brave Wattawamat
Is not afraid at the sight. He was not born of a woman
But on a mountain, at night, from an oak-tree riven by lightning,
Forth he sprang at a bound, with all his weapons about him,
Shouting, 'Who is there here to fight with the brave Wattawamat?'"
Then he unsheathed his knife, and, whetting the blade on his left hand,
Held it aloft and displayed a woman's face on the handle,
Saying, with bitter expression and look of sinister meaning:
"I have another at home, with the face of a man on the handle;
By and by they shall marry; and there will be plenty of 'children!"

Then stood Pecksuot forth, self-vaunting, insulting Miles Standish;
While with his fingers he patted the knife that hung at his bosom,
Drawing it half from his sheath, and plunging it back, as he muttered,
"By and by it shall see; it shall eat; ah, ha! but shall speak not!
This is the mighty Captain the white men have sent to destroy us!
He is a little man; let him go and work with the women!"

Meanwhile Standish had noted the faces and figures of Indians

Peeping and creeping about from bush to tree in the forest,
Feigning to look for game, with arrows set on their bow-strings,
Drawing about him still closer and closer the net of their ambush.
But undaunted he stood, and dissembled and treated them smoothly;
So the old chronicles say, that were writ in the days of the fathers.
But when he heard their defiance, the boast, the taunt and the insult,
All the hot blood of his race, of Sir Hugh and of Thurston de Standish,
Boiled and beat in his heart, and swelled in the veins of his temples.
Headlong he leaped on the boaster, and, snatching his knife from its scabbard,
Plunged it into his heart, and, reeling backward, the savage
Fell with his face to the sky, and a fiendlike fierceness upon it.
Straight there arose from the forest the awful sound of the war-whoop,
And, like a flurry of snow on the whistling wind of December,
Swift and sudden and keen came a flight of feathery arrows.
Then came a cloud of smoke, and out of the cloud came the lightning,
Out of the lightning thunder; and death unseen ran before it.
Frightened the savages fled for shelter in swamp and in thicket,
Hotly pursued and beset; but their sachem, the brave Wattawamat,
Fled not; he was dead. Unswerving and swift had a bullet
Passed through his brain, and he fell with both hands clutching the greensward,
Seeming in death to hold back from his foe the land of his fathers.

There on the flowers of the meadow the warriors lay, and above them,
Silent, with folded arms, stood Hobomok, friend of the white man.
Smiling at length he exclaimed to the stalwart Captain of Plymouth:
"Pecksuot bragged very loud, of his courage, his strength and his stature,—
Mocked the great Captain, and called him a little man; but I see now
Big enough have you been to lay him speechless before you!"

Thus the first battle was fought and won by the stalwart Miles Standish.
When the tidings thereof were brought to the village of Plymouth,
And as a trophy of war the head of the brave Wattawamat
Scowled from the roof of the fort, which at once was a church and a fortress,
All who beheld it rejoiced, and praised the Lord, and took courage.
Only Priscilla averted her face from this spectre of terror,
Thanking God in her heart that she had not married Miles Standish;
Shrinking, fearing almost, lest, coming home from his battles,
He should lay claim to her hand, as the prize and reward of his valor.

VIII

THE SPINNING WHEEL.

Month after month passed away, and in autumn the ships of the merchants
Came with kindred and friends, with cattle and corn for the Pilgrims.

All in the village was peace; the men were intent on their labors;
Busy with hewing and building, with garden-plot and with merestead,[48]
Busy with breaking the glebe, and mowing the grass in the meadows,
Searching the sea for its fish, and hunting the deer in the forest.
All in the village was peace; but at times the rumor of warfare
Filled the air with alarm, and the apprehension of danger.
Bravely the stalwart Standish was scouring the land with his forces,
Waxing valiant in fight and defeating the alien armies,
Till his name had become a sound of fear to the nations.
Anger was still in his heart, but at times the remorse and contrition
Which in all noble natures succeed the passionate outbreak,
Came like a rising tide, that encounters the rush of a river,
Staying its current awhile, but making it bitter and brackish.[49]

Meanwhile Alden at home had built him a new habitation,
Solid, substantial, of timber rough-hewn from the firs of the forest.
Wooden-barred was the door, and the roof was covered with rushes;
Latticed the windows were, and the window-panes were of paper,
Oiled to admit the light, while wind and rain were excluded.
There too he dug a well, and around it planted an orchard:

[48] **merestead.** A bounded lot.
[49] **brackish.** saltish.

Still may be seen to this day some trace of the well and the orchard.
Close to the house was the stall, where, safe and secure from annoyance,
Raghorn, the snow-white bull, that had fallen to Alden's allotment
In the division of cattle, might ruminate in the night-time
Over the pastures he cropped, made fragrant by sweet pennyroyal.

Oft when his labor was finished, with eager feet would the dreamer
Follow the pathway that ran through the woods to the house of Priscilla,
Led by illusions romantic and subtile deceptions of fancy,
Pleasure disguised as duty, and love in the semblance of friendship.
Ever of her he thought, when he fashioned the walls of his dwelling;
Ever of her he thought, when he delved in the soil of his garden;
Ever of her he thought, when he read in his Bible on Sunday
Praise of the virtuous woman, as she is described in the Proverbs, —
How the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her always,
How all the days of her life she will do him good, and not evil,
How she seeketh the wool and the flax and worketh with gladness,
How she layeth her hand to the spindle and holdeth the distaff,
How she is not afraid of the snow for herself or her household,
Knowing her household are clothed with the scarlet cloth of her weaving!

So as she sat at her wheel one afternoon in the Autumn,
Alden, who opposite sat, and was watching her dexterous fingers,
As if the thread she was spinning were that of his life and his fortune,
After a pause in their talk, thus spake to the sound of the spindle.
"Truly, Priscilla," he said, "when I see you spinning and spinning,
Never idle a moment, but thrifty and thoughtful of others,
Suddenly you are transformed, are visibly changed in a moment;
You are no longer Priscilla, but Bertha the Beautiful Spinner."[50]
Here the light foot on the treadle grew swifter and swifter; the spindle
Uttered an angry snarl, and the thread snapped short in her fingers;
While the impetuous speaker, not heeding the mischief, continued
"You are the beautiful Bertha, the spinner, the queen of Helvetia;[51]
She whose story I read at a stall[52] in the streets of Southampton,
Who, as she rode on her palfrey, o'er valley and meadow and mountain,
Ever was spinning her thread from a distaff[53] fixed to her saddle.
She was so thrifty and good, that her name passed into a proverb.

[50] The chief character in a German legend.

[51] **Helvetia.** Switzerland.

[52] **stall.** A booth, or shop.

[53] **distaff.** The staff for holding the flax or wool from which the thread is spun.

So shall it be with your own, when the spinning-wheel shall no longer
Hum in the house of the farmer, and fill its chambers with music.
Then shall the mothers, reproving, relate how it was in their childhood,
Praising the good old times, and the days of Priscilla the spinner!"
Straight uprose from her wheel the beautiful Puritan maiden,
Pleased with the praise of her thrift from him whose praise was the sweetest,
Drew from the reel on the table a snowy skein of her spinning,
Thus making answer, meanwhile, to the flattering phrases of Alden:
"Come, you must not be idle; if I am a pattern for housewives,
Show yourself equally worthy of being the model of husbands.
Hold this skein on your hands, while I wind it, ready for knitting;
Then who knows but hereafter, when fashions have changed and the manners,
Fathers may talk to their sons of the good old times of John Alden!"
Thus, with a jest and a laugh, the skein on his hands she adjusted,
He sitting awkwardly there, with his arms extended before him,
She standing graceful, erect, and winding the thread from his fingers,
Sometimes chiding a little his clumsy manner of holding,
Sometimes touching his hands, as she disentangled expertly
Twist or knot in the yarn, unawares—for how could she help it?—
Sending electrical thrills through every nerve in his body.

Lo! in the midst of this scene, a breathless messenger entered,
Bringing in hurry and heat the terrible news from the village.
Yes; Miles Standish was dead!—an Indian had brought them the tidings,—
Slain by a poisoned arrow, shot down in the front of the battle,
Into an ambush beguiled, cut off with the whole of his forces;
All the town would be burned, and all the people be murdered!
Such were the tidings of evil that burst on the hearts of the hearers.
Silent and statue-like stood Priscilla, her face looking backward
Still at the face of the speaker, her arms uplifted in horror;
But John Alden upstarting, as if the barb of the arrow
Piercing the heart of his friend had struck his own, and sundered cut.
Once and forever the bonds that held him bound as a captive,
Wild with excess of sensation, the awful delight of his freedom,
Mingled with pain and regret, unconscious of what he was doing,
Clasped, almost with a groan, the motionless form of Priscilla,
Pressing her close to his heart, as forever his own, and exclaiming:
"Those whom the Lord hath united, let no man put them asunder!"

Even as rivulets twain, from distant and separate sources,
Seeing each other afar, as they leap from the rocks, and pursuing,
Each one its devious path, but drawing nearer and nearer,
Rush together at last, at their trysting-place in the forest;

So these lives that had run thus far in separate channels,
Coming in sight of each other, then swerving and flowing asunder,
Parted by barriers strong, but drawing nearer and nearer,
Rushed together at last, and one was lost in the other.

IX

THE WEDDING-DAY.

Forth from the curtain of clouds, from the tent of purple and scarlet,
Issued the sun, the great High-Priest,[54] in his garments resplendent,
Holiness unto the Lord, in letters of light, on his forehead,
Round the hem of his robe the golden bells and pomegranates.
Blessing the world he came, and the bars of vapor beneath him
Gleamed like a grate of brass, and the sea at his feet was a laver![55]

This was the wedding morn of Priscilla the Puritan maiden.
Friends were assembled together; the Elder and Magistrate also
Graced the scene with their presence, and stood like the Law and the Gospel,
One with the sanction of earth and one with the blessing of heaven.
Simple and brief was the wedding as that of Ruth and of Boaz.[56]
Softly the youth and the maiden repeated the words of betrothal,

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[54] See Exodus xxviii, for the references in this description.

[55] **laver.** A brazen vessel in the court of a Jewish tabernacle, where the priests washed their hands and feet.

[56] Book of Ruth, chapter iv.

Taking each other for husband and wife in the Magistrate's presence,
After the Puritan way, and the laudable custom of Holland.
Fervently then and devoutly, the excellent Elder of Plymouth
Prayed for the hearth and the home, that were founded that day in affection,
Speaking of life and of death and imploring Divine benedictions.

Lo! when the service was ended, a form appeared on the threshold,
Clad in armor of steel, a sombre and sorrowful figure!
Why does the bridegroom start and stare at the strange apparition?
Why does the bride turn pale, and hide her face on his shoulder?
Is it a phantom of air,—a bodiless, spectral illusion?
Is it a ghost from the grave, that has come to forbid the betrothal?
Long had it stood there unseen, a guest uninvited, unwelcomed;
Over its clouded eyes there had passed at times an expression
Softening the gloom and revealing the warm heart hidden beneath them,
As when across the sky the driving rack[57] of the rain cloud
Grows for a moment thin, and betrays the sun by its brightness.
Once it had lifted its hand, and moved its lips, but was silent,
As if an iron will had mastered the fleeting intention.
But when were ended the troth and the prayer and the last benediction,
Into the room it strode, and the people beheld with amazement

[57] **rack.** vapor.

Bodily there in his armor, Miles Standish, the Captain of Plymouth!
Grasping the bridegroom's hand, he said with emotion, "Forgive me!
I have been angry and hurt,—too long have I cherished the feeling;
I have been cruel and hard, but now, thank God! it is ended.
Mine is the same hot blood that leaped in the veins of Hugh Standish,
Sensitive, swift to resent, but as swift in atoning for error.
Never so much as now was Miles Standish the friend of John Alden."
Thereupon answered the bridegroom: "Let all be forgotten between us,—
All save the dear old friendship, and that shall grow older and dearer!"
Then the Captain advanced, and, bowing, saluted Priscilla,
Gravely, and after the manner of old-fashioned gentry in England,
Something of camp and of court, of town and of country, commingled,
Wishing her joy of her wedding, and loudly lauding her husband.
Then he said with a smile: "I should have remembered the adage,—
If you would be well served, you must serve yourself; and moreover,
No man can gather cherries in Kent at the season of Christmas!"[58]

[58] An English proverb.

Great was the people's amazement, and greater yet their rejoicing,
Thus to behold once more the sunburnt face of their Captain,
Whom they had mourned as dead; and they gathered and crowded about him,
Eager too see him, and hear him, forgetful of bride and of bridegroom,
Questioning, answering, laughing, and each interrupting the other,
Till the good Captain declared, being quite overpowered and bewildered,
He had rather by far break into an Indian encampment,
Than come again to a wedding to which he had not been invited.

Meanwhile the bridegroom went forth and stood with the bride at the doorway,
Breathing the perfumed air of that warm and beautiful morning.
Touched with autumnal tints, but lonely and sad in the sunshine,
Lay extended before them the land of toil and privation;
There were the graves of the dead, and the barren waste of the sea-shore.
There the familiar fields, the groves of pine, and the meadows;
But to their eyes transfigured, it seemed as the Garden of Eden,
Filled with the presence of God, whose voice was the sound of the ocean.

Soon was their vision disturbed by the noise and stir of departure,
Friends coming forth from the house, and impatient of longer delaying,

Each with his plan for the day, and the work that was left uncompleted.
Then from a stall near at hand, amid exclamations of wonder,
Alden the thoughtful, the careful, so happy, so proud of Priscilla,
Brought out his snow-white bull, obeying the hand of its master.
Led by a cord that was tied to an iron ring in its nostrils,
Covered with crimson cloth, and a cushion placed for a saddle.
She should not walk, he said, through the dust and heat of the noonday;
Nay, she should ride like a queen, not plod along like a peasant.
Somewhat alarmed at first, but reassured by the others,
Placing her hand on the cushion, her foot in the hand of her husband,
Gayly, with joyous laugh, Priscilla mounted her palfrey.
"Nothing is wanting now," he said with a smile," but the distaff;
Then you would be in truth my queen, my beautiful Bertha!"

Onward the bridal procession now moved to their new habitation,
Happy husband and wife, and friends conversing together.
Pleasantly murmured the brook, as they crossed the ford in the forest,
Pleased with the image that passed, like a dream of love through its bosom,
Tremulous, floating in air, o'er the depths of the azure abysses.
Down through the golden leaves the sun was pouring his splendors,
Gleaming on purple grapes, that, from branches above them suspended,
Mingled their odorous breath with the balm of the pine and the fir-tree.

Wild and sweet as the clusters that grew in the valley of Eshcol.[59]

Like a picture it seemed of the primitive, pastoral ages,
Fresh with the youth of the world, and recalling Rebecca and Isaac,[60]
Old and yet ever new, and simple and beautiful always,
Love immortal and young in the endless succession of lovers.
So through the Plymouth woods passed onward the bridal procession.

—*Longfellow.*

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[59] **Eshcol.** When Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan, "they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff."

[60] **See Genesis, xxiv.**

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

The story of Sohrab and Rustum is based on an episode related in the Shahnamah, or Book of Kings, by Firdusi, the epic poet of Persia. The chief hero of the Shahnamah is Rustum, the Hercules of Persian mythology. Rustum was the son of Zal, a renowned Persian warrior. When a mere child, he performed many wonderful deeds requiring great strength and valor. He became the champion of his people, restored the Persian king to his throne, and defeated Afrasiab, the great Turanian, or Tartar, leader, who had invaded Persia. During a hunting expedition in Turan, his renowned horse Ruksh was stolen from him, and in order to recover it, he was forced to call on the King of Samangam, a neighbouring city. The king welcomed him, and gave him his daughter Tahminah, in marriage. Before the birth of his child, however, Rustum was called back to Persia, but he left with Tahminah a charm, or amulet, by which he might be able to recognize his offspring. When Sohrab, the son, was born, the mother, fearing that Rustum would return and take him away from her to bring him up as a soldier, sent word that a daughter had been born to him. Rustum, accordingly, did not return to Samangam, but remained in ignorance of Sohrab. In the meantime, as Sohrab grew up he became a great warrior, and having learned that the renowned Rustum was his father, he longed to meet him, that he might fight for him and help to make him king. At length the opportunity came. The army of Afrasiab, under the command of Peran-Wisa, invaded Persia once more, and Sohrab accompanied the host. The Persians prepared to meet the invaders, and the two armies met at the river Oxus, which formed the boundary between the two kingdoms. It is at this point that the story of *Sohrab and Rustum* begins.

[*Sohrab wakes in the early morning, and passes through the sleeping army to the tent of old Peran-Wisa, his chief.*]

And the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus[1] stream.
But all the Tartar[2] camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep:
Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,

[1] **Oxus.** One of the great rivers of central Asia, forming the boundary between Persia and Turan, or Tartary.

[2] **Tartar.** A general name given to the tribes in central Asia east of the Oxus.

He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's[3] tent.
Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere:[4]
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crown'd the top
With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—

[*Peran-Wisa wakes and asks the reason of his coming. Sohrab proposes to settle the battle by a duel with a champion selected by the Persians. By this plan Rustum would hear of it, and father and son meet at last.*]

"Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?"
But Sohrab came to the bedside and said:—
"Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.

[3] **Peran-Wisa** (Pĕ'răn-Wē'sä). The commander of the Tartar tribes which formed the army of King Afrasiab.

[4] **Pamere.** A plateau in central Asia.

The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab[5] bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand,[6] before the army march'd;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan[7] first
I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone.
Rustum, my father; who, I hop'd should greet,
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hop'd, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask,
Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:
But of a single combat Fame speaks clear."
He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—

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[5] **King Afrasiab** (Afrä'-sĭab). King of the Tartars.

[6] **Samarcand.** A city in Turkestan.

[7] **Ader-baijan** (Ader-bī'-yän). A province of Persia.

"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press forever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
Or, if indeed this one desire rules all,
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight:
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan,[8] with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.[9]
There go:—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening? and who govern Rustum's son?
Go: I will grant thee what thy heart desires."

[*Peran-Wisa fails to dissuade Sohrab. The sun rises, the fog clears, and the Tartar host gathers.*]

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat

[8] **Seistan** (Sā-ēs-tān'). A district of eastern Persia.

[9] Perhaps because he is beginning to feel old, or on account of some quarrel with the Persian king.

He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he plac'd his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd the fleece of Kara-Kul;[10]
And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd
Into the open plain; so Haman bade;
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd:
As when, some grey November morn, the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,
Stream over Casbin,[11] and the southern slopes
Of Elburz,[12] from the Aralian estuaries,[13]
Or some frore[14] Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board: so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara[15] come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.[16]
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,[17]

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[10] **Kara-Kul.** A district in Persia.

[11] **Casbin.** A city in Persia.

[12] **Elburz.** A mountain range in northern Persia.

[13] **Aralian estuaries.** The mouth of the rivers flowing into the sea of Aral.

[14] **frore.** frozen.

[15] **Bokhara** and **Khiva.** Districts of central Asia.

[16] The Tartars use an intoxicating liquor called *koumiss*, made from mare's or camel's milk.

[17] Lines 118-134 mention various nomadic tribes; the names are of no great importance.

The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck[18] and the Caspian sands;
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service[19] own'd;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks,[20] tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians form'd:
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
The Ilyats of Khorassan:[21] and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—

[18] **Attruck** and **Jaxartes** (l. 126). Names of rivers.

[19] **more doubtful service.** Their allegiance was doubtful; they were not bound to follow the army of King Afrasiab.

[20] **Kuzzaks.** Cossacks.

[21] **Khorassan.** A province of north-eastern Persia.

[Peran-Wisa calls on the Persians to find a champion, and Gudurz agrees to do so.]

"Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."
As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.
But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,[22]
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow;
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.
And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the king:
These came and counsell'd; and then Gudurz said:—
"Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits

[22] **Cabool.** Cabul, the capital of Afghanistan. The trade route between Cabul and Hindustan crosses the mountains at a great height.

And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up."
So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and said:—
"Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."

[*Gudurz calls on Rustum in his tent.* "*Help us, Rustum, or we lose.*"]

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood beside him, charg'd with food;
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand;
And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—
"Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."
But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—
"Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day: to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:

For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
And he is young, and Iran's[23] chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose."

[*Rustum at first declines, but stung by the taunt of Gudurz he agrees to fight—to be unknown by name.*]

He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—
"Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I
Am older: if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honours younger men,
And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have,
A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old agē.
There would I go, and hang my armour up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."

[23] **Iran.** The original name of Persia.

He spoke, and smil'd; and Gudurz made reply:—
"What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men."
And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply:—
"O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of nought would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;[23]
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man."

[*Rustum arms; his appearance in the field brings joy to the Persians.*]

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turned, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold
And from the fluted spine[24] atop a plume
Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.
So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,

[23] **in plain arms.** Without any device on his shield.

[24] **fluted spine.** The hollow spike at the top of the helmet, in which the helmet-feather or crest is fitted.

Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find,
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;
Dight[25] with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know:
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein,[26] in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale[27] of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

[*Rustum advances; warns Sohrab. Sohrab is young; why should he court defeat and death?*]

And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.

[25] **Dight.** decked.
[26] **Bahrein.** An island.
[27] **tale. number.**

And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and ey'd him as he came.
As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum ey'd
The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs: long he perus'd[28]
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—
"O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried;[29] and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:
Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?

[28] **perus'd.** scanned.

[29] **tried.** experienced.

Be govern'd :[30] quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die.
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."

[*Sohrab has vague suspicions it is his father. Rustum, in ignorance, coldly waives aside all overtures. They fight.*]

So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Has builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streak'd with its first grey hairs: hope fill'd his soul;
And he ran forwards and embrac'd his knees,
And clasp'd his hand within his own and said:—
"Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?"
But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,
And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul:—
"Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts.
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast day, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—
'I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they

[30] **Be govern'd.** Take my advice.

Shrank ; only Rustum dar'd : then he and I
Chang'd gifts,[31] and went on equal terms away.'
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me."
And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud :—
"Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
By challenge forth : make good thy vaunt, or yield.
Is it with Rustum only thou would'st fight ?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this ;
Do thou record it in thine immost soul ;
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield ;
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away."
He spoke : and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet :—
"Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so.
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then,
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin : thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young,—
But yet success sways with the breath of heaven.[32]
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,

[31] **Chang'd gifts.** Exchanged gifts, as a sign of friendship.
[32] **Success is changeable as the wind.**

Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know:
Only the event will teach us in its hour."

[*Sohrab avoids Rustum's blow. Rustum falls on the sand, and has his life spared by his son.*]

He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet:[33] Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide: then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield: sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he
Could wield; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough; like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes,[34] when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,[35]
And strewn the channels with torn boughs; so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.

[33] **plummet.** The lead used for sounding the depth of the sea.
[34] **Hyphasis or Hydaspes.** Two great rivers in northern India.
[35] **wrack.** ruin; destruction.

And Rustum follow'd his own blow and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand:
And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword,
And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand:
But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—
"Thou strik'st too hard: that club of thine will float.
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth: not wroth am I:
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou say'st thou art not Rustum: be it so.
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"
He ceas'd: but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage: his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn star,[36]

[36] **that autumn star.** Sirius, the dog star.

The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heav'd; his lips foam'd; and twice his voice
Was chok'd with rage: at last these words broke away:—

[*Rustum in wounded pride returns furiously to the combat. He shouts his cry of "Rustum!" Sohrab incautiously at the sound exposes his side to a wound and falls.*]

"Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curl'd minion,[37] dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valour: try thy feints
And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:
Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."
He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword: at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west: their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part

[37] **minion.** darling, or favorite. The word is generally used to express contempt.

In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-spik'd spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust;
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom
Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand:—
The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.
Then Rustum rais'd his head: his dreadful eyes

Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amaz'd: back he recoil'd one step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form:
And then he stood bewilder'd; and he dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side.
He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.
And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

[*Sohrab says his fall will be avenged by Rustum.*]

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:—
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."
And with a fearless mien Sohrab replied:—
"Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,
And I were he who till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.

But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear!
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"
As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by:—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.

[*Rustum anxiously says he never had a son, but only a daughter.*]

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said:—
"What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son."

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :–
"Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old king, her father, who grows grey
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.[38]
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,[39]
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far distant Oxus, he is slain."

[*The truth breaks in upon Rustum. Again he charges Sohrab with a false tale.*]

He spoke; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,

[38] **Koords.** The people of Kurdistan.
[39] **It will be rumoured, or bruited,** abroad.

Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms;
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style[40] of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking ocean sets to shore
At the full moon: tears gathered in his eyes;
For he remembered his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain lodge descries
A far bright city, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds;—so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old king, her father, who lov'd well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said:—

[40] **style.** title or name.

"O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
But one—a girl: who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war."
But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

[*Sohrab discloses the mark by which he was to be known. "O boy—thy father!"*]

"Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore."
He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks;
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand,
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud:
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—
"Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.
If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son."
Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd
His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,
And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points

Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands:—
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd[41]
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,[42]
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
Him that kind creature found, and rear'd and lov'd—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—
"How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?"
He spoke: but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—
O boy—thy father!—and his voice chok'd there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life: and life
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror: and he seiz'd

[41] According to the original legend, Rustum left an amulet, or charm, with the mother of Sohrab. Arnold has altered this detail of the story, and substituted a seal for the amulet.

[42] **griffin.** A mythical creature, half-lion, half-eagle, which was supposed to keep guard over hidden treasure. Just as in Roman mythology, Romulus and Remus were reared by a she-wolf, so in Persian mythology, Zal was reared by a griffin.

In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms:
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs chok'd him; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said:—

[*Father and son embrace.* "*Would that the Oxus were flowing over me!*" *says the unhappy father.*]

"Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it: but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engag'd
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this: I find
My father; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say, 'My Son!'
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be."
So said he: and his voice releas'd the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,

With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other mov'd
His head, as if enquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—
"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy master to this field."
But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—
"Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed!
My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the river of Helmund,[43] and the lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said—'O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!'—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:
But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,

[43] **Helmund.** A river in Afghanistan.

Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir ;[44] and this great Oxus stream—
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."
And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied :—
"Oh that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt[45]
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"

[*Sohrab's dying wish.* "*Draw off your forces; build for me a memorial pillar in Seistan.*" *He foretells the death of Rustum.*]

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :—
"Desire not that, my father; thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age.
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come: thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:
Let me entreat for them: what have they done?
They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—

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[44] **Sir.** Another name for the river Jaxartes.

[45] **silt.** A deposit of mud or fine earth.

Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—
And I be not forgotten in my grave."
And with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—
"Fear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be: for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host: yea, let them go:
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown;
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine; and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.—

But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age;
And I shall never end this life of blood."
Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—
"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now;
Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day,[46]
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,[47]
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave."

[*Rustum is left by the body of his son. The river Oxus flows on under the starlight into the Sea of Aral.*]

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said:—
"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."
He spoke; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd
His wound's imperious[48] anguish: but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent pour'd, dim now, and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By romping children, whom their nurses call
From the hot fields at noon: his head droop'd low,
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes clos'd; only when heavy gasps,
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,

[46] This prophecy was not fulfilled. Rustum, according to the legend, met his death by treachery at the hand of his half-brother Shughad.

[47] **Kai Khosroo.** The King of Persia, see line 220.

[48] **imperious.** demanding relief.

Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis,[49] to bear
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog: for now
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal:
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward; the Tartars by the river marge:
And Rustum and his son were left alone.
But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian[50] waste,
Under the solitary moon: he flow'd
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,[51]

[49] **Persepolis.** An ancient city supposed to have been built by Jemshid, or Jamshid, a mythical king of Persia.

[50] **Chorasmian waste.** A desert land, on the lower Oxus.

[51] **Orgunjè.** A village on the Oxus.

Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters[52] opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

—*Arnold.*

[52] **home of waters.** The Aral Sea, or "Sea of Islands."

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